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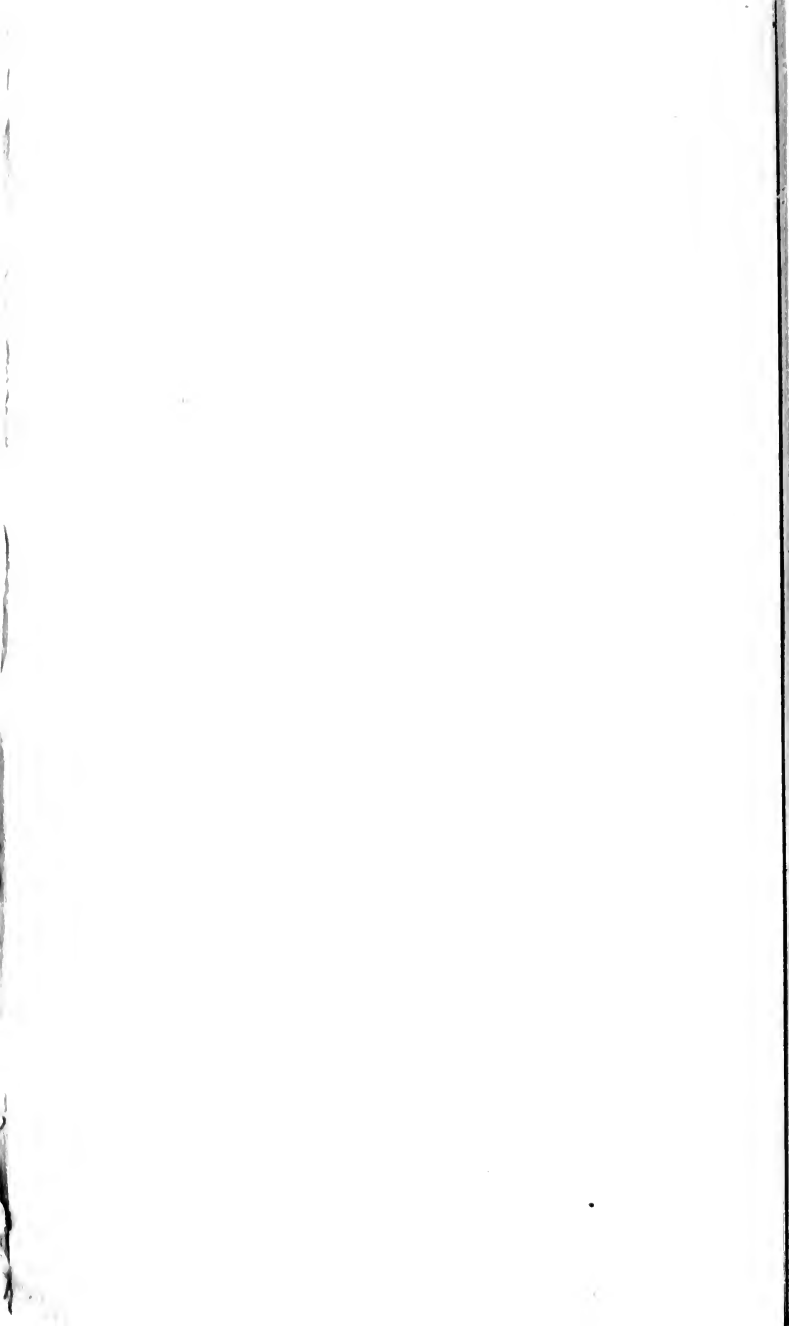
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ANNE SEVERIN.

BY THE

AUTHOR OF "LE RÉCIT D'UNE SŒUR."

IN THREE VOLUMES.

VOL. II.



LONDON:

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CONTENTS.

	PAGE
CHAPTER I.	1
CHAPTER II.	32
CHAPTER III.	43
CHAPTER IV.	63
CHAPTER V.	71
CHAPTER VI.	80
CHAPTER VII.	94
CHAPTER VIII.	101
CHAPTER IX.	109
CHAPTER X.	127
CHAPTER XI.	142
CHAPTER XII.	162

	PAGE
CHAPTER XIII.	181
CHAPTER XIV.	194
CHAPTER XV.	208
CHAPTER XVI.	230
CHAPTER XVII.	242

ANNE SEVERIN.

CHAPTER I.

“Do come back to the fire; the wind is so cold! Do come in, my darling. You can wait here just as well as out of doors.”

These words were addressed by Madame Severin to her daughter, who did not at first appear to hear her voice. She was sitting in the garden at some distance from the open window, gazing before her in an absent manner, while the autumnal wind was blowing about the leaves, and driving before it heavy masses of clouds which had suddenly

obscured the close of a fine October day.

The pleasure-ground of the chalet was carefully kept, and, late as it was in the season, was still plentifully adorned by flowering shrubs and brilliant flowers, which were yet visible in the deepening twilight. On one side of the garden was a large field, and on the other the high road. From the spot where she was sitting, Anne could see the pathway across the meadow, and the dark masses of trees in the Park of Villiers; behind which rose, in yet deeper blackness, a bank of murky clouds. When her mother called to her again, she started up and bowed her head in token of assent, but before going in she walked once more to the farthest end of the alley, and stood at the garden gate, gazing anxiously on the road, apparently

unconscious of the increasing wind, which was blowing about the folds of her grey dress, and driving her thick hair back from her forehead and face. There was something particularly graceful in her figure and attitude at that moment, something very sweet in the expression of her eyes and the delicate form of her features. The charm implied in that untranslatable Italian word *simpatico*—that mysterious attraction which does not always accompany beauty, and sometimes supplies its place—Anne possessed in a remarkable degree. At last she tore herself away from the gate, after one more look at the path across the field and at the road, and came back to the fire, where her mother was sitting. After shutting down the window, she knelt before the grate.

“It is really very cold to-night,” she

said. "The winter has encroached on the autumn this year."

After gazing silently on the fire for a little while, she suddenly exclaimed, "What can be the reason of it, mamma?"

Madame Severin replied by another question. "But why will you have it, darling, that there is something strange in it?"

"Because papa never goes out at this hour, and Guy never sends for him in this way. He was much more likely to come here if he wanted to speak to him."

"But perhaps it is not Guy, but the Marquis, who had something to say to him."

"Well, perhaps so," Anne said, moving a chair close to the chimney; and there she sat, gazing on the fire, which was the only light in the room.

When the darkness had obliged Madame Severin to shut up her book, she had pulled her rosary out of her pocket, but the absent manner with which she kept rolling it through her fingers showed that she was not quite as free from anxiety as she tried to make her daughter believe. The drawing-room, or rather the library, in which they were sitting, was filled with books, which covered the walls, except where a few engravings occupied the vacant spaces between the shelves. Opposite to the chimney was a pianoforte, and in the deep embrasure of the window a writing-table and a seat. Nearer the fire stood a table, a sofa, and a few arm-chairs. When the uncertain light of the blazing logs threw out a brighter gleam, the picture over the chimney became visible. It was the full-length portrait of the Marquise de

Villiers—beautiful, grave, and pale, as she was at the time when it had been painted.

Half an hour elapsed, and the clock struck seven. A servant came in with the lamp, which he placed on the round table. Anne started up. “Is it already seven o’clock?” she exclaimed. “At what o’clock exactly was my father sent for, Sylvain?”

“At two o’clock, mademoiselle.”

“Two o’clock!—and it is now seven! Are you sure they said it was Monsieur le Comte, and not Monsieur le Marquis, who wanted to see my father?”

“It was Monsieur le Comte,” Sylvain answered.

“And who said so?”

Sylvain looked as if he did not understand.

“I mean, who came with the mes-

sage? Was it Thibault—the Marquis's valet?"

"No, mademoiselle; it was Louis, M. Guy's servant."

"But after all, what does it matter?" Madame Severin said, when Sylvain was gone. "What difference does it make who brought the message? What strange idea have you got into your head?"

"This is what I think, mamma," Anne said; "I am afraid there has been some quarrel between Guy and his father."

"About what?" Madame Severin exclaimed, with an anxiety she could not quite conceal. "Have you any reason to think so? Has there been any disagreement between them lately?"

"No, not that I know of. But what I do happen to know is, that Guy was in anything but a good humour to-day."

“You have seen him, then?”

“Yes—this morning after Mass. I was coming down the avenue towards the path in the field, and walking very fast. I did not know that Guy was following me. As soon as I heard the sound of his footsteps, I stopped; and then he said, ‘If you would only not run quite so fast when I wish to speak to you!’ I immediately perceived by the sound of his voice, even before I had looked at him, that he was out of temper.”

“And what was the matter?”

“Well, I asked him, and he said, ‘The matter is, that I have determined to go away, and shall not return. Anything is better than to live here and be for ever blamed, thwarted, and misunderstood. I could love my father so dearly, if he would let me. But the

fact is, I am too like him. We cannot get on together ; it is better to make an end of it,' and so on. Poor Guy ! he had tears in his eyes, but he was very determined, very violent. I had not seen him so violent since the day——” She stopped, and glanced at the mark on her arm, which was visible through her open sleeve.

Madame Severin sighed deeply, and raised her eyes to the portrait over the chimney. The melancholy expression of Charlotte’s beautiful countenance seemed to answer that glance. The lips of her friend almost moved as if she were addressing her. Then, making an effort to conceal her feelings, she opened her book, and began to read. She seemed determined not to express her own apprehensions, though she could no longer argue against Anne’s fears. Another hour

elapsed. Madame Severin got up and rang the bell. Sylvain appeared, but before he had time to shut the door, the noise of a carriage, followed by the ringing of the bell at the garden gate, was heard.

“It is Monsieur le Comte’s phaeton,” Sylvain said.

Good heavens, what has happened?” both mother and daughter exclaimed.

Instantly the thought passed through Anne’s mind that some accident had befallen her father, but before she had time to utter her fears he entered the room. She rushed to him with a joyful exclamation. He kissed her, and gave orders that the phaeton was to wait. When Sylvain offered as usual to take away his stick and hat, he told him to leave them alone, as he was going out again;

and going up to the chimney, he stood for a moment or two with his back to it, without speaking.

One glance at his face had been enough to convince his wife and daughter that Anne's presentiment had been a true one, and that he had bad news to tell them. Owing to that wonderful rapidity of thought which makes it possible to conjure up in one brief moment every variety of imaginary circumstances, all sorts of dreadful fears passed through their minds during the instant that Pierre Severin remained silent. There are not many persons in the world fortunate enough never to have known that certain sense of an impending misfortune, the nature of which is still a mystery, who have not felt their hearts beating with audible violence during such moments of terrible suspense.

“What has happened, Pierre?” Madame Severin exclaimed, whilst Anne’s eyes were silently asking the same question.

“Go, my child,” Monsieur Severin said to his daughter; “go, my child, and put your things on. I must take you with me to the castle. You are wanted there.”

Anne felt at once that she must think of nothing but doing as she was told. Without saying a word she went to her room, put on her bonnet, and fastened her cloak with trembling hands. In less than five minutes she was ready, and on opening the door of the drawing-room she heard her mother say, “But only consider a little;” and her father reply, “What is the use of considering, my dear, when there is but one thing to be done?” and, turning to his daughter,

he said, "Come, my little girl, let us be off. I will tell you what has happened as we go along. He then led Anne through the garden to the gate. Her mother, who had followed them, folded her in her arms, and said in a low voice, "May God bless and guide you, my child!" And as they were starting, she again whispered an earnest entreaty to her husband, who made a gesture which seemed to imply, "How can we help it!"

The carriage rolled away on the road to Villiers, and Anne, bewildered by the rapid motion, the darkness, and the sudden realization of the fears which had haunted her for several hours, kept silently gazing on the road, or at the clouds quickly passing over the moon, the fitful rays of which threw an uncertain light on the stormy sky and the waving trees.

She did not venture to question her father, and was anxiously waiting for him to speak first. She soon found that he was plunged in a fit of deep abstraction, and seemed to have forgotten her presence. Meanwhile, the time was going by. The drive from the chalet to the castle did not take much more than a quarter of an hour, and its front and towers were already in sight, when Anne gently touched her father's arm, and said, "We shall be there in a few minutes. Won't you tell me, papa, what has happened?"

M. Severin started, as if waking from a trance. "I am glad you spoke to me, my child," he said, "I was quite forgetting you were there." And then, after a pause, resuming by a sudden effort the calm energetic manner that was natural to

him, he added, "My poor master is dead!"

Anne turned pale. "Dead!" she repeated, in a low voice; and there was an instant's silence. "And Guy—was Guy with him?" she asked in a faltering manner.

"Guy went out early in the morning," her father answered, "and came in again at twelve. He went into his father's room, and an hour afterwards rushed out, looking pale and agitated. He jumped on his horse, which was standing at the door, and rode off at full gallop. Five minutes afterwards Thibault went upstairs to his master, and, to his horror, found him lying motionless on the floor."

"Oh, my God!" Anne exclaimed, quite overpowered with grief and fear. "Oh, my God, how dreadful! And

what happened afterwards? It was Guy who sent for you : he came back, then ?”

“ Yes. The first thing Thibault did was to dispatch a groom in the direction he had taken ; but a whole hour elapsed before he could overtake him. In the meantime, the Marquis had recovered, and of his own accord had sent for M. le Curé. When Guy came in, he held out his hand to him, but he could not speak. Guy was saying all sorts of wild things, frantically entreating his forgiveness, and then rushing out to send for doctors, and also for me. When I arrived, my poor master knew my voice, I think, and I fancied that when I took his hand he pressed mine, but his last look was for his son.”

“ But not a word ?” Anne said.

“ No, not a word.” M. Severin did not speak for a few minutes, and then

added, "But I must finish what I have to tell you, for we are almost at the chateau. When the Marquis had breathed his last, we tried to lead Guy away, but he resisted all our efforts and entreaties, and behaved in so strange a manner that he seemed to be out of his mind. He kept repeating that he had killed his father, and all sorts of extravagances. After this had lasted three hours, old Thibault said, 'If anybody can manage him, it is Mademoiselle Anne. You ought to send for her.' And so I came to fetch you, my darling. Did not I do right? You have often been able to quiet him when he has been in one of these violent moods. May God help you to do so now."

Anne bent her head in token of assent, and made a short mental prayer. As soon as the carriage stopped, she

jumped down and entered the hall. The order which generally reigned in the chateau had completely disappeared, and everything bore the impress of a recent calamity. The lamp which hung in the hall was not lighted, and there were only dying embers in the wide chimney where a bright fire was usually burning. A single candle on the mantelpiece dimly lighted that spacious entrance-hall. The staircase at the bottom of it was only just visible. Anne hastened towards it, but her father stopped her, and whispered, "Wait a minute. Sit down here, and let me go up first. I will call you when I see that the right moment is come."

Anne did as she was bid, and M. Severin ran up the staircase. A moment afterwards she heard a door open, then a sound of voices, followed by the slam-

ming of the same door. And soon she saw her father in the gallery on the landing-place of the first storey. Thibault was with him, and two other servants. They were speaking together in a low voice. Anne quickly joined them.

“I suppose you tried,” she said, “to get him out of that room; and now he has shut himself up in it.”

“Exactly so, mademoiselle,” old Thibault answered. “He is not like a person in his right senses. It is quite dangerous to contradict him; and yet there are things that ought to be done. We have had all the trouble in the world to light two tapers, and to put a holy water stoup near the bed. He won’t let even M. le Curé come in. Just now he forced your father and me out of the room; and because Jean and Louis

wanted to remain in it, he went into a passion, pushed them violently outside the door, and then slammed it so that the very walls shook."

Whilst the old servant was speaking, Anne was leading the way towards a long passage which opened on the gallery at the top of the stairs. "There is another door, is there not," she asked, "to the room where he is?"

"Yes, one that opens into the dressing-room, but he has probably locked it too, and the door of the dressing-room in the passage is also almost always locked. M. le Marquis used I know to keep it shut. He would never let anybody go into that little room."

Anne knew this was the case. She had never set foot in it herself. "He used to lock it," she hesitatingly said; "perhaps to-day then——"

She did not finish her sentence, but old Thibault understood her. The hand which, the day before, had carefully closed that door, was now stiff and cold. Anne gently touched the handle, and it opened. They all stopped short, and she said, "Please let me go in alone. If the door of the bed-room is open, I will slip in gently ; or if not, I will get him to open it. Do not be afraid, and wait for me below, or in the drawing-room. He must not think there is anybody with me."

M. Severin and Thibault made no objection. They both seemed to think that the only thing to do was to follow her suggestions. Anne took the candle from Thibault, and waited in the passage till they had gone downstairs. Then she went in, and, shutting the door after her, found herself for the first time in

her life alone in that dressing-room, which, though still called by that name was in some ways more like an oratory. There was hardly any furniture in it besides a *prie-dieu* and a small organ, which stood between the windows. A few volumes, chiefly prayer-books, an ivory crucifix, and some holy pictures and trinkets, amongst which Anne remarked a large silver locket, were locked up in a glass book-case, and seemed to imply a pious recollection of the past, but nothing otherwise suggested the idea of the room being appropriated to devotional purposes. Everything about it was cold and silent, and had it not been for an arm-chair, with a small table beside it, which made it appear that some one had been in the habit of sitting there, it would have been natural to conclude that the apartment had been wholly deserted.

This solitary seat was so situated as to command a full view of the only picture in the room—the portrait of a young girl in the full bloom of youth and beauty, which was hanging over the *prie-dieu*.

Anne looked round the room, and was struck with the sight of these memorials. A religious emotion soothed her agitation and calmed her overwrought nerves. She felt herself under God's care, and protected by a blessed departed soul. Kneeling down on the *prie-dieu*, she raised her eyes to the fair face which was so dear to her, and on which she could almost fancy she saw a smile. It was the same glance which an hour before had seemed to answer her mother's silent appeal. But here the loved countenance was young and bright again, and kisses as well as blessings

seemed to come through those parted lips.

“Help me, and pray for him,” Anne murmured, as she rose from her knees and moved softly towards the door which opened on the funeral chamber. She tried to open it, but it was locked inside, and no notice was taken of the noise she made with the key. She listened a moment—a deep groan was the only sound which now and again broke that fearful silence. Her heart was beating fast. She waited a minute, and then knocked. No reply. She knocked again, a little louder. The same silence continued. Once more she renewed the attempt. There was a noise of steps towards the door, and a loud imperious voice cried out, “I said I chose to stay here alone; I forbid anybody to come near me!”

Anne tried to speak, but her voice failed her. She stood still for a little while, and then for the fourth time knocked at that closed door, but started back, alarmed and in tears, at the violence with which she heard Guy stamp, as if enraged at the interruption. This burst of passion seemed almost like a profanation in the chamber of death. She did not venture to say anything in reply to the words, "Who is there—who ventures to disturb me?" which Guy uttered with increasing violence.

As she stood trembling in the middle of the room, and praying for guidance, a strange idea came into her head, and she acted upon it at once, without giving herself time to hesitate. The organ was close to her; she opened it, gently touched the keys, and started back almost frightened at the sounds she had

elicited in the midst of the profound silence. She stopped for a moment, expecting a fresh burst of anger, but hearing nothing she went on softly playing, and in a little while ventured to sing the first notes of an air which she knew Guy liked better than any other; though her voice faltered a little, she managed to get through the first verse—

Death is a friend
That sets us free,
And endless life
Begins for thee.

Anne had no sooner uttered these words, than the door of the bed-room opened. Her heart was beating very fast, but she did not move from her place. Guy came and stood near her. He did not speak, but with his arms crossed leant against the wall. She glanced at his face, but its expression

did not allay her fears. His hair was dishevelled, his tearless eyes were wide open and staring before him with a look in which there was more of wildness than of grief. Inwardly praying all the time, she went on playing, and even finished the song she had begun—

Farewell, until the day
I know will surely come,
When we shall meet again
In our eternal home.

Before the last tremulous note of Anne's voice had died away, the spell which had bound Guy's pent-up heart was broken—his tall form bowed down and his face buried in his hands. She tried to speak to him, but felt unable to utter a word. The sounds which she continued to draw from the keys, which seemed to thrill under her touch, conveyed better than any other language

the feelings of her heart. It was not long before passionate sobs burst from Guy's bosom ; his tears flowed in torrents, he sank down on the floor, exhausted, but relieved, softened, and subdued.

Anne knelt by his side and wept with him. Both at the same moment looked up at the picture of his mother. " Oh, mother, mother !" Guy exclaimed, with a fresh burst of grief ; and then turning to the young girl exclaimed, " God bless you, Anne ! you have been once more my guardian angel."

Two hours afterwards Anne Severin was sitting by the fire in her little room at the chalet, drying her feet, and undoing her hair, wetted by the rain, which had fallen in torrents all the evening. Her mother was listening to her account of what had happened at the chateau. After relating what has been already

described, she went on. "He had a long fit of crying, which of course I did not try to interrupt. At last he became a little quieter, and of his own accord told me what I had already guessed. Yes, there had been a terrible scene this morning between him and his father. I cannot tell you exactly what it was about, for Guy could hardly tell himself. He only remembers that at first he kept his temper, as he had promised me he would. But he says that at last he fell into a passion, and then God knows what he may have said. He left without uttering another word, without looking back! Oh, dear mamma! only fancy what he must have felt when he was sent for, and found his father dying. It was dreadful to hear what he said about it, and, indeed, it is terrible to think that he may have caused his father's death, though of course involun-

tarily.” As she said this, Anne, who had not given way till that moment, burst into tears, and sobbed as if her heart would break.

Her mother sat down by her, and drew her head gently to her breast. She made no attempt to stop the tears which were flowing down her face ; but soothing her, as if she had been a child, with tender words and kisses, she removed the hair from her wet and flushed cheeks. Anne’s agitation soon subsided, but she remained with her head resting on her mother’s bosom, without moving or speaking, only kissing now and then the hand which was gently stroking her face. At last she fell asleep in the arms of her mother. As she gazed on her child, a sudden pang seized Madame Severin’s heart ; one of those forebodings of future sorrow, akin to the prophetic sword

which pierced the soul of the noblest and highest of mothers in the hour of her joy and hope. What parent has not known this kind of fear for the child by whose side she has watched and prayed; that mournful sense of the helplessness of her poor human love to shield and to save it from life's threatening woes ?

CHAPTER II.

THE funeral of the Marquis de Villiers was over, the lights in the chapel extinguished, and the candlesticks and white cloth on the altar only just discernible. Two persons still remained in the sacred building ; one was praying in the sanctuary—the other kneeling in the tribune of the Lords of Villiers. After a while the former rose, and went up to the young man in deep mourning, whose form was scarcely visible amidst the black hangings of the tribune.

“Come with me,” the Abbé Gabriel whispered.

Guy did not seem at first to hear or

understand; but when the Curé again said, "Come with me to my house, my dear Guy, I want to speak to you," he rose and followed him out of the church and into the garden of the presbytery.

The wind was high, and he stood for a moment at the door of the church, looking up at the clouds careering along the sky, and enjoying the boisterous breeze which played in his hair and refreshed his hot brow and swollen eyes.

The Curé, in the meantime, had hastened into his room to see if his orders had been observed. A bright little fire blazed in the hearth, and everything looked cheerful and comfortable for Guy, who soon came in, with a melancholy countenance, and sat down in a chair near the chimney. For more than ten minutes he did not speak. His eyes went wandering in a listless

manner round the room, and everything in his attitude and manner betokened the deepest depression. Since the moment that Anne had recalled him to his senses, he had not given way to any vehement bursts of grief or anger, but had, on the contrary, tried to make up for his passionate conduct by the most arduous self-constraint. He had quietly given all necessary directions for the melancholy ceremony which had just taken place. Everything had been thought of and done in accordance with the respect due to his father's memory, and even to his cherished prejudices. But now that all that was over, he felt nothing but the most profound dejection.

“You know,” he exclaimed at last, “you know, Monsieur l'Abbé, that you used to tell me that if I did not over-

come the violence of my temper, I should end by committing some act of passion which would have terrible results. Your prediction has indeed been realized. For you know, as well as I do, that I loved my father, and was always hoping the time would come when I might be a comfort to him. And now there is an end to all such hopes. I cannot grieve for him as other sons, if they are not heartless wretches, grieve for their fathers. I am torn by a dreadful remorse, which will make my life a curse and a burthen to me. There is something too horrible in the thought that I caused the death of my father, and a father I dearly loved."

As he said this, Guy hid his face in his hands, and convulsive sobs shook his frame. The Abbé Gabriel remained silent awhile, gazing sadly on the young

head bowed down in so much anguish. He did not wish to interrupt too soon the outpouring of that repentant grief, or check the atoning flow of those remorseful tears. But when, in a few minutes, Guy began again in the same self-accusing strain to work himself up into a fit of despair, he deemed the time was come to put a stop to a morbid agitation, which might be as injurious to that ardent soul as any other uncontrolled passion. He took hold of his hand and said, in a mild but authoritative manner, "Listen to me, my child; you will not suspect me of wishing to flatter or to deceive you. I have never been over-indulgent to you that I know of. You may believe then what I am going to say. The suddenness of your poor father's death was a great blow, and the angry words, the last you ever

heard from his lips, are a sad recollection. But this has been your misfortune, not your fault. My dear Guy, you are not as guilty as you think. Indeed, as regards that last interview, you are not guilty at all."

Guy shook his head incredulously.

"I see you do not believe me, and yet it is in your father's name I speak. What I have just said is what he thought, and what he would have wished himself to say to you. I can give you the proof of it."

Guy looked at the Abbé with surprise. "What do you mean? Can the dead speak?"

The Abbé drew a paper out of his pocket, and placed it in his hands. Guy glanced at the contents, and then slowly read them over again two or three times consecutively. His countenance gra-

dually lost its expression of gloomy misery.

At last he asked, "But who is it that said this? Who wrote down these words?"

"They were your father's words. He had not lost his speech when I arrived, and he was able, as you know, to perform his religious duties. He afterwards mentioned to me what had passed between you that morning, and God inspired me to write down what he said, in case you arrived too late to hear it from his own lips. You see what his words were, 'I bless my son, and I beg him to forgive me, as I hope God, in his infinite mercy, has already done.' "

"*I forgive him—I forgive my father!* What does it mean?—what did he mean?"

"He meant that in that scene which

has remained so fearfully present to your mind, you were not the offending person. No, in this instance he was the one to blame. He knew and felt it, and in that hour of repentance which it pleased God to vouchsafe to him, he sent you his blessing, and said he had nothing to forgive. Do you understand this, Guy? Do you understand that this is a solemn message from your dying father, and that these words were uttered at a moment when nothing that was not strictly true could have passed his lips?"

Guy listened with silent astonishment to this communication. The terrible apprehension that he had caused his father's death had produced such an effect on his imagination that it had deceived him with regard to what had taken place between them during that last interview. Every angry expression he had ever given

utterance to on former occasions had, he fancied, been used that day, and in his agitation he lost all remembrance of the efforts he had made to control his temper, and of the feeling which made him rush out of the room rather than give way to his increasing irritation. He remembered what his father had said to him. His own words he had forgotten; but his horror at finding the Marquis dying on the very spot where they had been uttered, inspired him with the idea that they must have been very dreadful. Hence his despair; hence his wild answers to Anne's questions, and her erroneous impression of what had taken place. Now, with the evidence before him of what had really happened, the past appeared in a different light. The storm in his soul gradually subsided, and the stern self-control which had enabled him to

maintain an outward composure gave way to a more gentle and calm state of mind.

He clasped the Abbé's hands, and exclaimed, "Oh, my dear Father, why—why did you not tell me this before?"

The Curé answered, "My dear son, you refused to listen or attend to anything I said. But I own to you, Guy, that I do not regret the suffering you have gone through. It may save you in the future from such guilt and such misery as in this instance you had erroneously imagined you had incurred; from remorse which, thank God, you need not feel, and regrets which I am sure you do feel."

Guy listened in a gentle, submissive manner to the Abbé's words, but it was a gentleness that did not preclude firmness and strength; on the contrary, it indicated the most determined resolution

to struggle and to conquer his besetting sin. The good Curé read in his face this tacit promise ; and he often said afterwards that Guy looked at that moment like a young David armed for the fight, and confident of victory.

CHAPTER III.

GUY had inherited not only his father's violence of character, but also his contempt for that despicable form of human respect which, through weakness and the stress of bad examples, leads men into excesses; but his resistance to temptation had a higher and deeper source than pride. Guy's youth had been surrounded by holier and gentler influences than his father had known. The remembrance of his mother, the society of his little playmate, and the intelligent solicitude of the Abbé Gabriel, had supplied his soul with more powerful safeguards than mere routine can furnish, and when the

impetuous tide of his youthful passions began to rise, its surges were met by nobler and more effectual barriers than those which the haughty Marquis de Villiers had opposed to similar temptations.

Very different also was the epoch in which he entered the world from that which the last generation had witnessed. A host of generous combatants had banded together to defend the highest of all causes, and Guy, at twenty years of age, possessed all the qualities which fitted and disposed him to join their ranks. A strong religious faith, an ardent love of liberty, respect for the past and hope for the future, filled many a youthful heart at that time with earnest desires and eager anticipations which were not all destined to be fulfilled. Some of these young and ardent spirits missed their way, but, after wandering

for a while in visionary dreams and empty space, most of them returned to swell the ranks of those who steadily marched onward with a definite purpose, and helped to form that glorious phalanx, dear to religion, science, and art, whose works and whose writings will prove hereafter one of the greatest glories of their country and their age.

During the last two years Guy had made acquaintance with some of the young writers in the *Avenir*, and though he differed with them in some respects, on the whole he sympathized with their views and feelings. They suited well his ardent character, which enjoyed a struggle. They satisfied his soul, which had a natural tendency towards everything noble and great, and considered all common and low aims as signs of weakness, if not of meanness.

The Marquis de Villiers had often complained of his son's liberal predilections, and there had been many a stormy discussion between them on that subject; but on some points Guy could never be induced to surrender his independence. He submitted to his father, but did not give up his opinions. As to the paramount duty of fidelity to the political creed which their family had always professed, and a determination not to serve the reigning power, they were perfectly agreed. But Guy could not admit that it was right or expedient to remain shut up as it were in an entrenched camp, aloof from all the important questions and interests which, outside the sphere of politics, were enlisting on both sides eager combatants, and to look with stolid indifference on every subject not immediately affecting

their own party. Nor could he see that it was incumbent upon him to hold no intercourse with those who differed, indeed, with him in politics, but with whom he sympathized in higher and more important ways. He had always maintained his freedom of thought and action on these two points, justly enough, it must be admitted, if not with sufficient moderation. The Marquis, however, did not approve of shades of opinion, and if he ended by tolerating Guy's views it was from the fear that opposition would goad him further still, and perhaps beyond the limit which, as it was, he had no fear of his transgressing.

The Abbé Gabriel was delighted to see his pupil's ardent character find so safe a vent, and he used all his efforts to bring the Marquis to look indulgently upon what he considered his son's eccen-

tricities. It seemed to him so extraordinary that a father should not see the subject in the same light as he did. "He ought to be so glad," he thought, "to see him up in the clouds, instead of grovelling in the dust!"

His simple, straightforward mind could not understand the way in which human judgment allotted blame in a contrary ratio, as far as it appeared to him, to the gravity of the offence. He thought it marvellous that the Marquis should apparently attach more importance to the orthodoxy of his son's political opinions than to the purity of his private life. When he heard that there were men, and even Christians, in the world, who did not hesitate to shake hands with persons who were openly breaking the law of God, and who would yet refuse to meet with cordiality a political

adversary, he was simple enough to feel shocked, and to think all the better of Guy because his ideas of right and wrong differed from those of the world.

“But for all that,” the Curé thought, “Guy is only twenty-two!” He was delighted with his present good dispositions, but did not feel any security for the future. Even though his repugnance for vice and love for virtue had hitherto preserved him from all excesses, would it always be so? Was there nothing to fear? . . . And he always sighed when he put to himself this question, for his simplicity did not result from want of experience or from ignorance of the dangers of the world. He knew little or nothing of society, but had been accustomed to dive into the recesses of the human heart with indulgent charity indeed, but with a full knowledge of the

snares, of the deceits, and even of the abysses which it sometimes reveals.

Many anxious reflections had passed through his mind whilst he sat by his fireside after Guy had left him. He remained musing on what had passed between them till the door opened and Pierre Severin came in. He had come on purpose to inquire how his interview with their young friend had passed off, and in what state of mind he had found him. "I do not know how many things I have to settle with him," he said. "All sorts of papers he must look at and sign. He must not spend this sad evening alone. I am going to the chateau, but I wanted to see you first."

The Curé immediately related to him the conversation he had with Guy.

"Thank heaven!" exclaimed Pierre Severin. "This indeed is good news,

my dear Curé. Now I can go to him at once, and I shall find him, I am sure, in quite a new frame of mind."

"Stop a minute," cried the Curé.

"You need not be in such a hurry. As he is now all right you can stay and talk with me a little. What do you think Guy will do? I suppose he will be going away soon?"

"Of course he will," Severin answered.

"Yes, I was thinking so; and God knows when the dear boy will return, and what he will be like when he comes back to us."

"But what would you have, my dear Curé? You cannot expect Guy to spend his life at Villiers between the chateau and the chalet?"

"No—oh, no. It would be impossible, I suppose."

“ I conclude he will go to Paris, and that when his deep mourning is over he will mix in the world and amuse himself a little. Hitherto he has had very little liberty, and very little money at his command. Now that he will have plenty of both, we must hope he will not make a bad use of them; but that he will have his fling we must expect.”

“ I see what you mean,” the Curé said, gently withdrawing from Severin’s hands a pencil he had taken from the writing-table and was flourishing about. “ But do sit down, Severin. How can one talk with a man who walks up and down the room and fidgets about? I cannot collect my thoughts, and I have many things I want to say to you.”

“ Well, here I am ready to hear them,” Severin said, and he sat down in the same place which Guy had occu-

pied a short time before. "What have you to tell me, my dear Curé? Has anything new or of consequence happened since our last meeting?"

The Abbé Gabriel did not answer at once. He made up the fire, got up to light the lamp on the chimney, sat down again, cleared his throat, and at last said—

"My dear Pierre, you say that Guy will amuse himself at Paris. Aye! he will amuse himself. It is all very well to put it in that way. I too wish him every happiness this world can give, and I should not mind his amusing himself if—if I did not know what that really means in the language of the world; and if once Guy—you know it as well as I do—takes to that sort of life it will not be with moderation, and then ——"

Severin shrugged his shoulders and

replied, "But how is it to be helped? And after all, Guy is not quite new to the world. It will not be his first visit to Paris, and you know that the friends and companions he likes the best are not devoted to that frivolous life you speak of."

"I grant it," the Curé answered. "What you say is quite true; but will this go on now that he will be sought after, flattered, and made much of by everybody? He is so young, so impetuous, so easily influenced!"

Severin thought that the Curé's fears were natural, but his remarks somewhat commonplace, and that he was detaining him for the purpose of hearing mere truisms. "I do not see what we can do," he answered. "I can suggest only one resource, and it is more in your line than mine. You

must pray for him, and must especially pray—for I see your fears lie in that direction—that the first woman who obtains a hold on his affections may be one whom he can love truly and honourably. In other words, that he may soon meet with the person his mother would have wished him to marry, and who will nobly bear her name and worthily fill her place.”

“Ah, indeed, that is just what I am thinking of—just what I wanted to say to you!” exclaimed the Curé. “We quite agree there, my dear Severin. Everything turns upon it. If this could be secured, goodness, happiness, usefulness, would follow; and, if things go differently, a terrible downfall of our hopes for him may ensue.”

“And what of that?” rejoined Severin, impatiently. “I don’t see that

we are better off because we settle that in our minds. Besides, if we are to look to this desirable issue, the sooner he goes away and gives himself the chance of meeting with such a wife the better. It is not here he will find her."

The Curé looked up and said, "Pierre, I don't quite agree with you there."

"Why, do you know of any girl in this neighbourhood he could marry? I don't think he knows one to speak to, except Anne."

"No, I suppose not."

"And I presume you would not have the Marquis de Villiers marry my daughter?" Pierre said, with a smile.

"Why not?" the Curé exclaimed. But he was sorry he had uttered the words, when he saw in Pierre Severin's

countenance how deeply they had surprised and annoyed him.

“Monsieur le Curé,” he said, “as I cannot believe you would jest on this subject, I must tell you that if such a thought was ever to enter Guy’s head, it would be so great a misfortune for all of us, that I cannot even suppose it possible. And I own that if any one but you had spoken of it I should feel very much hurt.”

“I do not see, my dear Pierre, why you fire up in this way !”

“I fire up because such an idea goes against all my notions of what would be proper — nay, honourable — in my position.”

“But why ?” the Curé again asked.

“Why, M. le Curé ! Well, I own I am surprised you do not see at once my reasons ; but if I am to state them, here

they are. I have managed and improved these estates for half a life time, and doubled their income. I did it in the interest of my late poor master and his son, without any selfish views. I do not boast of it, but at the same time I feel that this might justly be called in question, supposing the Marquis de Villiers was after all to propose to the daughter of his agent, who would have thus amply repaid himself for his labours by beguiling his master's son into a marriage unworthy of his rank."

"Unworthy of him! Really, my dear Severin, you exaggerate immensely. You speak just as the poor Marquis might have done."

"It would not be strange if I was influenced by his opinions in a matter of this kind."

"I do not know where we should

stop if we reasoned in that way. Do you think Guy himself would abide by that rule? You almost provoke me, Pierre. You speak as if I wanted Guy to go against his father's wishes; and, indeed, I am not aware that the Marquis ever expressed any on that subject. And I suppose that if I were to remind you that we are not living in an age when quarterings are much thought of, you would call me a radical."

"No, I am of your own way of thinking there, and in another case than my own I should probably advise Guy not to attach importance to considerations of that sort. I grant you that I ought to have said just now—not that it would be unworthy of Guy to think of such a marriage, but that it would be unworthy of me ever to give my consent to it."

“But if he did think of it; and if Anne——”

Severin hastily broke in. “Do not let us speak any more about it, M. le Curé. What is the use of discussing an imaginary case, and distressing ourselves by arguing about circumstances that do not, thank God, exist; and which would place me in so painful a position? Nothing of the sort is likely to occur. The intimate terms on which Anne and Guy have always been together would in itself preclude it. He will never fall in love unless his imagination is strongly excited. As soon as that happens his heart will be touched. This was the case with his father, and, please God, Guy will not fare worse in his choice. But as to Anne, whom he has known from a baby, he never would think of falling in love with her.”

“Are you quite certain of it?”

“Quite; and as to her, you know, I can rely on her prudence and good sense.”

“Yes, indeed, poor child. She has those merits, and many others also, and I do not yet see sufficient reason why she is to be compelled to give up a happy lot if it should be offered to her—who knows at what a cost of secret struggles and suffering? Those poor young hearts, they do ache so much sometimes. But, however, she is your daughter; you must act as you think right, but I frankly tell you that I do not at all admire your stoical virtue and your inflexible resolution. There is something I don’t quite like in it, something proud and overstrained, almost pagan, I should say.”

“Oh, come, my dear Curé,” cried

Severin, "you are really getting un-Christian, uncharitable yourself. You really must forgive me, and as we have been arguing an imaginary case, we can now, I think, shake hands and part in amity."

The Curé smiled, and Severin, after taking leave of him, walked quickly to the chateau.

CHAPTER IV.

ANNE was in the meantime quietly sitting at home in an arm-chair by the fireside, dressed in deep mourning, and looking pale and harassed. A young man was standing near her, and listening with the most anxious interest to the account she was giving him of all that had happened at the chateau. This was no other than Franz Frank, that friend of Guy's who had been the innocent cause of the scene between him and his father, of which Anne's arm still retained the mark. He had subsequently been received kindly at the chateau, and still more so at the chalet, and he had, perhaps, enjoyed the

hours spent in the home of Pierre Severin more than his visits to the Marquis de Villiers's house. Two years, however, had elapsed since that time. Franz had been in Italy, and had now returned to Paris with a reputation which the success of the first picture he had exhibited had at once established. But in spite of the charm that attends the dawn of fame, and the flattering buzz of public applause, Franz, as soon as he heard of the death of the Marquis, had hastened to Villiers. He valued praise—he had evidently coveted success, but there was something dearer to him than either, and that was his friend.

He was surprised that Guy had not written to him, and suspected that there must be some reason for this silence. It did not seem natural that he should have suffered him to learn the news of his

father's death only through a letter from Madame Lamigny, and he no sooner arrived at the Pré Saint Clair than he hurried on towards Villiers, where he arrived just as Madame Severin and her daughter were leaving the church. He came back with them, after the funeral, to the chalet, and Anne then gave him a full account of all the circumstances that had attended the Marquis's death. She had not seen Guy since they had met in the oratory, and her impressions were, in consequence, entirely derived from the exaggerated view he had taken of what had passed in his last interview with his father. Franz was very much depressed after hearing her account.

“This is indeed sad,” he said, after a long silence. “Guy has energy enough to go through any amount of trial, and some kinds of suffering would rather

tend to strengthen his character than to lower it. But then it must not be this sort of trial; not one against which energy is powerless. You are right. Nothing could be worse for him than that."

Anne did not reply, but leant back with her eyes closed, and only opened them to wipe away the tears which now and then kept stealing down her cheeks.

Franz stood near the chimney, silently gazing at the pale face. He thought it prettier than ever, in spite of its worn and sorrowful expression. For a moment his attention wandered from the sad subject which had been engrossing his mind, but it soon reverted to it. "It is getting late," he said. "I must go to the chateau."

As he was moving towards the door, the garden bell rung. Anne started up,

and a moment afterwards her father, whom she was expecting, appeared, and with him Guy, whom she did not expect. No sooner did she see Guy than she at once perceived that a happy and unaccountable change had taken place in his expressive countenance. She looked at him in silent astonishment. After greeting his friend in a hurried manner, he turned to Anne, sat down by her side, and in a low voice told her all that had passed between him and the Abbé Gabriel. He pulled out of his pocket the paper he had given him, and explained to her in what way he had been mercifully relieved from the remorse which had made his grief so intolerable.

Anne's countenance brightened up whilst she listened to him, and her eyes seemed to reflect the joy which beamed in his. When he finished speaking, she

clasped her hands together, and said,
“Thank God! Oh, thank God!”

Guy, hardly conscious of what he was doing, almost knelt down before her, and taking her little hands between his own, he kissed them. They seemed to forget that there were three persons in the room looking on; but if they had remembered it, it would have made no difference.

It was evident, however, that the witnesses of this little scene were all surprised. Madame Severin and Franz did not know what Anne and Guy were talking about, and could not understand the reason of their joy at the close of so sad a day. As to Pierre Severin, the pleased look with which he had entered the room had given way to an anxious expression, and when the conversation between Guy and his daughter ended in the manner above described, he frowned.

Meanwhile, Guy was telling Franz how happy he was to see him, and announcing his intention of carrying him off to the chateau, and keeping him there with him for an indefinite time. Accordingly, after taking leave of Severin and his wife, and once more pressing Anne's hand, while he whispered to her that she was to repeat to her mother all he had told her, he went away with Franz. The two friends walked slowly together towards the chateau, hardly conscious of the coldness of the night, so engrossed were they with the subjects which they were longing to talk over.

Anne, when they were gone, began to tell her parents all that Guy said to her. She did not notice at first that her mother was the only listener. But when she had done speaking, and when, before going to bed, she went

up as usual to her father to kiss him, she was quite taken aback by the cold and severe manner, so different from his usual tenderness, with which he looked at her. "What is the matter?" she exclaimed, in a faltering voice. "What have I done?"

M. Severin, as soon as she made this exclamation, seemed to recollect himself, and his countenance resumed its naturally good-humoured expression. "Nothing, nothing, my little girl," he answered. "Kiss me, and go to bed. Kiss me again," he added, fondly detaining her in his arms. "Do not fret, my child. There is nothing the matter. But go, darling, now. I want to talk to your mother."

CHAPTER V.

FROM that time forward, Guy devoted himself earnestly to all the duties of his new position. Under Severin's guidance, he gave up several weeks to business, and entered into details by no means congenial to his tastes. He would have willingly abandoned his affairs to the able and careful management of his father's friend ; but Severin was anxious to impress upon him that to look into them himself was a duty he was bound to discharge.

They were arranging one morning a number of papers, when a letter with a black edge was brought to the young

Marquis. After glancing at its contents, he gave it to Severin, and said, "Just read that, and tell me what it means."

"Ah, poor Devereux! he too is dead!" exclaimed Severin.

"That Mr. Devereux my father used to talk of sometimes! Whom he knew in England in the time of the emigration?"

"Exactly so."

"Where, and when did he die?"

"From what I gather from this letter, it must have been two months ago, and at Calcutta, where he was Solicitor-General."

"Oh, true! I remember my father said so. But who writes to him, and what child does the letter allude to?"

Severin looked again at the letter, and read aloud the following sentence:—

“As to the poor child whom you are expecting, it will be impossible for her to set off before she has a little recovered the shock of these sad tidings.”

Severin glanced at the signature, “Cecilia Morton.” At first this did not enlighten him, but after thinking a little, he exclaimed, “Of course! This must be Lady Cecilia Morton, sister of Lady Sarah, Mr. Devereux’s wife. They were both daughters of the Governor-General of India. I remember hearing your father mention them. He used now and then to receive letters from his old friend.”

“But I wonder how Lady Cecilia came to write to him, and who the child is she speaks of. There must be other letters.”

They instituted a search, and in the book-case of the oratory found what they

were looking for. The Marquis de Villiers had kept the letters there, as he did everything connected with Charlotte's memory. Henry Devereux had lost his wife five years after their marriage. He had one little girl, whose birth he had announced to the Marquis. Soon afterwards, he had informed him of the death of Lady Sarah. When the Marquise de Villiers died, her husband found a sort of consolation in writing to one who had loved her, and suffered so much on her account, and afterwards from a bereavement similar to his own. His correspondence with Henry Devereux had been one of the secret consolations of his latter years, and the letters had therefore been placed in the shrine where he kept everything nearest to his heart. And thus Guy and Severin found out that Evelyn Devereux had been sent when

she was ten years old to her aunt, Lady Cecilia Morton, and that Devereux had several times since expressed the wish that his friend could see his daughter. This reminded Severin of what had till then escaped his memory.

“I now recollect,” he said, “that about a year ago the Marquis spoke to Louisa about this girl, and said that he meant to ask her aunt to let her come and spend a month or two with us here. I had quite forgotten it.”

Severin went on reading the letters, and suddenly exclaimed, “Look here, Guy. This explains what we wanted to know.” The letter he gave him, and which was dated from Calcutta, was addressed to the Marquis, and had been written in the spring of that year. It ended as follows:—“The cholera is raging here, and in my present state of

health it is particularly likely, I think, to carry me off. I do not much expect ever to see you or your country, or my own, again. I shall not live to see my child ! Forgive me if I sadden you by these presentiments. I hope you will not attach more importance to them than they deserve. But in case they should prove true, let me entreat you to continue to take a kind interest in my daughter, and to carry out what you know is my great wish. I have written about it to my sister-in-law, who will communicate with you on the subject. It is the only thought I dwell upon with pleasure. I want my Evelyn to know the friends of my youth. I cannot bear to think of her being a stranger to you and to Louisa Severin. I know this may seem a strange fancy, but I am bent upon it ; and whether I live on in this banishment,

or die as soon as I expect, the idea that my child has made acquaintance with you will be my greatest comfort."

Lady Cecilia Morton had evidently complied with her brother-in-law's request, for in a letter from her to the Marquis, dated October 21st, mention was made of her niece's approaching visit to Villiers.

Guy thought a little, and said, "This letter must have arrived here on the 24th, the day before my father's death."

"Yes," Severin answered. "He must have locked it up with the others the last time he went into the oratory, and we of course never heard a word about it. Now, it appears by the letter you have just received, that the news of Mr. Devereux's death, just as she was about to start, delayed the young lady's coming."

“Strange,” Guy said, after a pause ;
“strange that her father and mine should have died nearly at the same time. What can we do with that girl ? I cannot, of course, receive her. Don’t you think we had better write to stop her coming ?”

“I have no doubt your father meant her to come to the chalet, and not to the castle, though he had not time to mention the subject to us. He knew, of course, from what my wife had said some time before, that we should be willing to receive her.”

Madame Severin turned out to be far more conversant with the whole affair than her husband, who, to say the truth, had not paid much attention to it. She felt very much interested in Henry Devereux’s daughter, and very sorry for her. It seemed to them all that the death of the Marquis and of her father was not a reason for neglecting to carry

out what had been the wish of both; that, on the contrary, it ought more than ever to induce them to act up to its spirit. They agreed together that Madame Severin should write to Lady Cecilia and inform her of the death of the Marquis de Villiers, and at the same time renew in her own name the invitation already given to Evelyn Devereux, reminding her that her acceptance of it would be in strict accordance with the desire expressed by her father on his death-bed. In due time a civil but cold note from Lady Cecilia acknowledged the receipt of the letter, and mentioned that early in the ensuing month her niece would go to Villiers. Guy did not pay any more attention to the subject, and hastened to despatch the business which was detaining him at home. He intended, as soon as ever that was done, to go to Paris with Frank.

CHAPTER VI.

MADAME SEVERIN had appeared very much out of spirits since the conversation she had had with her husband in the evening of the day of the Marquis's funeral. Anne had vainly tried to find out the cause of this depression. Her mother's way of answering, and the expression of her countenance, implied that there was something on her mind which she did not like to speak of. The perfect confidence which existed between Madame Severin and her daughter generally made it easy for each to read the other's thoughts; but in this instance they did not seem able

to understand each other. Anne was beginning to fret over this little cloud, without venturing to ask a direct question on the subject, when the announcement of Evelyn Devereux's approaching arrival drove away for a time all other pre-occupations. She was quite taken up during some days by the preparations which this visit necessitated.

Guy came every day to the chalet, either in the morning or in the evening. Franz had returned to the Pré Saint Clair, but the two young men were to go together to Paris. On the eve of the day fixed for their departure, Franz's aunt, Madame Lamigny, called in the afternoon at the chalet.

She was a fat, comfortable-looking woman, whose smiling and still handsome face so overflowed with good nature, that on first acquaintance it gave

her countenance a pleasant expression. But after a time this excess of sympathy became tiresome, and its perpetual manifestations produced in the end a directly contrary effect on most people. Guy declared that they possessed the properties of Medusa's head, and were enough to harden the tenderest hearts.

She came, on this occasion, into the room with a great burst of sensibility, and after clasping Madame Severin in her arms, proceeded to embrace her "liebe Annchen," for whom she professed a particular admiration.

Anne had certainly felt very much the melancholy event at the chateau; but no sooner did Madame Lamigny strain her to her bosom than she began to grow barbarously indifferent to the Marquis's death; and when she asked in a commiserating voice, "And how is

the poor dear young Count—that is to say, the poor dear young Marquis ?” she answered in a cold, hard manner, that he was quite well.

Madame Severin, however, went into greater details, and spoke of the press of business which had occupied Guy for the last two months, and added that he was going to leave Villiers on the following day. The conversation which ensued was made up of question and answer, Madame Severin and Anne replying alternately to Madame Lamigny’s innumerable inquiries—for an excessive curiosity was one of the weaknesses of the good lady of the Pré Saint Clair. At last she moved her chair close to Madame Severin’s, and in a confidential manner said, “And the marriage ? When may we speak of it ?”

“What marriage ?” asked at the

same time the mother and the daughter.

“Why, the young Marquis’s, of course. I know it is all settled; but when is it to be announced?”

Madame Severin glanced at her daughter, and saw that Anne was smiling. She then gaily said that she had not the least idea what Madame Lamigny meant.

“Oh, very well, very well,” Madame Lamigny replied. “Of course, you are in the secret, and are not at liberty to speak.”

“But I assure you——” Madame Severin began.

“Oh come, my dear friend, be as silent as you like about it; but do not deny what I know to be the case?”

“You know it to be the case?”

“Yes, of course I do. The dear

young Count—the dear young Marquis I mean—tells my nephew everything, and it is from Franz that I have heard the news.”

Madame Severin looked surprised, but Anne could not help laughing.

“You do not mean,” she exclaimed, “that M. Franz would have repeated to you, or anybody else, what Guy had told him in confidence? Oh, Madame Lamigny!”

Madame Lamigny was taken aback, for nothing was further from her intentions than to injure her nephew in the eyes of Anne and her mother, whose good opinion she was, on the contrary, particularly anxious to secure.

“Oh dear, no, my dear; Franz has not revealed to me his friend’s secret. God forbid. I never meant to imply that; but—but, you see——”

The good lady was puzzled. She would have liked to recall her words, but Anne was laughing so incredulously, and smiling in such a provoking manner, that she could not refrain from saying, “No, Franz has not told me any secret; but when I was talking to him yesterday, and enumerating the names of all the young ladies of great family and wealth whom I know by hearsay—because my poor Lamigny was always talking of the great people whom he would have visited if he had lived in Paris, and so I knew their names by heart—Franz laughed; and when I had gone through the list, he said, ‘My dear aunt, I beg leave to observe that, though I am not at liberty to mention whether the name of the future Marchioness of Villiers is included in that list, thus much I may tell you—Guy’s choice is already made;

and before a year has elapsed we shall see him established at Villiers with his wife.' ”

After delivering this speech Madame Lamigny stopped, and felt gratified at thinking that she had at last made some impression on her hearers ; and she was pleased also to find that her nephew was further in the confidence of the young Marquis than the Severins themselves, judging by their surprise. This twofold triumph satisfied her, and after a little more conversation on indifferent subjects—for she plainly saw that there were no hopes of learning anything beyond what she already knew with regard to the marriage, she took leave of Madame Severin and Anne in the most affectionate manner, and went back to the Pré Saint Clair in high good humour, and well satisfied with her morning's work.

As soon as she had left the house, Anne exclaimed, "Do you believe a word of it, mamma?"

Madame Severin did not answer immediately. Anne looked at her, and was shocked to see how unhappy she seemed.

"Mamma!" she said, in a different voice.

"Anne, darling, I must speak to you," Madame Severin began, and then paused before she went on. "For some time past I have had something on my mind which I felt I ought to say to you, but I was always putting it off in hopes that circumstances would perhaps make it unnecessary; but now I see I must make up my mind to it."

She sat down in an arm-chair, on the cushion of which Anne was leaning, and, putting her arm round her daughter's

waist, she said, "Well, my dear love, I think what Madame Lamigny has just told us is true."

Anne looked surprised.

"I know what you would say," her mother continued. "You cannot understand that Guy, who tells us everything, should not have told us that."

Anne made no reply, but nodded in assent.

"I have reason to think that he has not yet told us—not told you, my love—because he feels secure as to your answer. What I mean is, that Guy intends to propose to you."

Anne flushed violently, started up, and, after a moment of silent surprise, said in a faltering voice, "Guy propose to me, mamma?" Her heart was beating so violently, that she could hardly draw her breath.

“Yes,” Madame Severin replied, with a sad countenance. “Yes, and I believe he loves you better than any one; and you, too, dear child, love him, I know, as much as if he were your brother.”

“Oh, indeed I do,” Anne answered with great simplicity. “You know I love him quite as much as if he were my brother.”

“I am aware of it, dearest; and, moreover, I believe you would have found it easy to love him as a wife should love her husband.”

Anne blushed, and said, “I do not know about that. I never thought of it till now. I am only sure of one thing, and that is, that I love Guy with all my heart, and that I do not see how it would be possible to love any one more than I love him.”

These words were uttered with an

earnestness of manner which gave them a sort of solemnity, and Madame Severin's heart sank within her. She thought of the youth, whom she was almost as fond of as if she had been his mother; her eyes involuntarily turned to the lovely picture of her departed friend, and she felt for a moment inclined to hesitate. It almost seemed as if she were about to betray the charge she had received from Guy's dying mother, who had so earnestly commended her son's happiness to her care; but Pierre's words came back to her mind and confirmed her purpose. For twenty years she had been in the habit of submitting her judgment to his, and had never had cause to repent of it. She had always found him wise, good, and prudent. How could she then act against his will on a point which concerned him so nearly, and on which

he had so entirely the right to decide?

She threw her arms around Anne, and said in a low voice, "And yet, my dearest child, if Guy were to propose to you, you must refuse him."

These words were the beginning of a long conversation between the mother and daughter, which lasted till near dinner time.

At six o'clock Guy arrived at the chalet with Franz. After dinner he asked Anne to look for a book in the next room, where he hastened to join her. It had been a sort of school-room, where in former days they used often to learn their lessons together. Madame Severin's anxious eyes watched their disappearance.

In about half an hour, Guy, silent and gloomy, came back without Anne to

the drawing-room. He kissed Madame Severin, but went away without taking leave of Pierre, who was to see him again before his departure, and returned to the castle with Franz, who did not ask him any questions. The night was spent in packing up; he did not give himself a moment's rest. At five o'clock in the morning, he jumped into his carriage with his friend, and they had been driving for nearly an hour on the Paris road before he uttered a word. At last he said, "You were completely mistaken, my dear Franz. She does not care for me at all—not, at least, in the way I thought. She says nothing would induce her to become my wife."

CHAPTER VII.

THE day after Guy's departure, Anne and her mother went to Mass together as usual, but on coming out of church they parted company. Madame Severin walked back alone to the chalet, and Anne through the side door towards the little garden of the presbytery.

The weather was frosty, the sky bright and clear. Anne wrapped herself closer in the folds of her grey cloak, and paced up and down an alley at the end of the Curé's garden. It was overarched with old trees, the twisted branches of which formed in summer a roof of foliage impervious to the sun. It was there the

Abbé Gabriel was wont to compose his weekly discourses to his parishioners, and he had on that account given it the name of the Sunday Walk. At one end stood a pretty statue of the Blessed Virgin, and at the other a stone bench.

For a few minutes Anne remained alone, but the Curé soon joined her, and for about twenty minutes they walked up and down slowly enough to allow them to converse. Anne spoke first, and at some length. The Curé listened with his head bent down, his hands behind his back, only now and then interrupting her with a brief question; but when she left off speaking, and seemed to expect him to answer, he appeared to hesitate, and kept silence for a little while. They were coming back towards the bench. The Curé sat down, and remained still some time buried in thought. It was

not often that he found so much difficulty in giving an answer to those who came to him for advice. He seemed thoroughly at a loss, and his eyes were steadily fixed on the little book he had in his hand, as if he was seeking light from the words "Biblia Sacra," inscribed on the back of it.

Anne meanwhile, with her arms crossed on her chest and her head bent down, was waiting, not impatiently, but anxiously, for his answer.

What was the difficult question she had submitted to the guide of her conscience, and which seemed to puzzle the aged priest, so used to deal with all sorts of troubled and afflicted souls? We shall know it by his reply, which he gave at last in a positive and deliberate manner, pausing between each sentence as if he were weighing every word.

“Yes, my child,” he said, “notwithstanding what occurred last night, you may go on considering Guy, as you have always done, as a brother and a friend. You may receive his letters, and you may answer them.”

The Curé stopped a moment, and then added, “Of course you understand that there must be no reference to the subject which your father prohibits. I know, Anne, you can be trusted on that point.”

“I gave that promise to my father,” Anne answered.

“My dear child,” the Curé continued, “I should not have said, perhaps, to any other girl I know what I have just said to you; but, though so young, you have acted towards Guy the part of a friend older and wiser than himself, and I cannot, at present at least, advise you to give up the task.”

Anne's countenance brightened. The Curé's words were a great relief. She tried to kiss his hand, but he laid it on her head, and said in a voice which faltered a little, "God bless you, my poor child. Go in peace, and endeavour to correspond more and more with the graces God has given you, and especially with that great gift—forgetfulness of self. Selfish people are the only real sufferers here below."

The Abbé Gabriel accompanied Anne to the door which opened from the garden to the high road, and then walked sorrowfully back to his house. She, on the other hand, went briskly on her way home. She had been afraid of losing Guy entirely. She feared everything would be changed between them by what had passed. But now she was reassured; they might still be friends;

she could still love him as a brother. What did she want more? What else had she ever dreamed of? She arrived at the chalet refreshed by the sweet morning air, her colour heightened by exercise, and her face beaming with the joy which her conversation with the Curé had given her. Her parents were in the dining-room, anxiously expecting her return. Madame Severin knew where she had been. She had herself suggested that she should seek consolation from the friend and the adviser who had guided her from her childhood, but she did not expect that even he would be able to speak much comfort to Anne. Her mother's heart was bleeding; happiness had been offered to her child's acceptance, and she had been forced to reject it. M. Severin, who had been compelled to admit that it was a real

sacrifice he had required at his daughter's hands, felt ill at ease, and almost dreaded to see her come in. When the door opened, and Anne appeared looking radiant and with her own sweet smile on her face, his surprise was only equal to his pleasure, and completely reassured, he dismissed all the misgivings which had begun to disturb him. As to Madame Severin, she clasped her daughter in her arms, with a heart lightened but not altogether relieved from anxiety. She was less confident than her two companions that there were no clouds hanging over the future.

CHAPTER VIII.

FOR some time everything went on as usual at the chalet, apparently, at least, and no new event occurred till one evening, when, as it was getting dark, the sound of a travelling-carriage on the high-road gave notice of the arrival of the young stranger whose visit had been so long looked forward to. Anne was at that moment in the room which had been got ready for the English guest, and had just been putting on the dressing-table a bunch of early violets. After a last look, to see that nothing was wanting which could make it cheerful and comfortable, she ran downstairs;

but a sudden fit of shyness, as she reached the hall, made her remain where she was instead of rushing to meet Miss Devereux.

Sylvain was opening the front door, and M. and Madame Severin coming out of the drawing-room and hastening to the entrance steps to meet the young traveller.

An instant afterward, Anne saw her father leading in a tall and graceful girl, whose face was partly concealed by the long crape veil which she wore over her black bonnet, and out of the folds of which escaped thick locks of brown hair. Behind her followed an individual whom Sylvain would never have guessed to be the lady's maid. He showed her into the drawing-room, and it was only when he found that, after leaving her mistress's bag near the door,

she withdrew, it flashed upon him that he had to do the honours of the offices to this smart lady, and to introduce her to the still more astonished Jeanneton.

In the meantime Anne had been called by her parents, and came forward immediately to greet Miss Devereux. The room was almost dark, and they could scarcely see each other's face; but after a few words of conversation with the new comer, Madame Severin asked her if she would not like to go to her room, and told Anne to take her to it. As they were leaving the drawing-room, Madame Severin pressed Evelyn's hand between hers, and said, "It is a very old friend of your father's who receives you under her roof, my dear child—almost a mother; and I wish with all my heart that you may feel at home here."

The earnestness of Madame Severin's

manner, and the kind way in which she said the words, "At home," seemed to touch the young girl. She did not answer, however, except by bowing her head, and she and Anne went upstairs together.

Anne led the way into the pretty bed-room, made cheerful by a bright fire and the lighted candles on the dressing-table. Then for the first time she saw distinctly the face and figure of the visitor. "How lovely! how beautiful she is!" were her inward exclamations, and hardly could she restrain the expression of her admiration.

Evelyn Devereux did not seem in any particular hurry to look at Anne. She had thrown herself on a couch by the fireside, as if overcome by fatigue, bodily or mental. Anne gazed on her perfect profile, her dazzling complexion, her lovely form, her beautiful auburn

hair, her eyelashes darker than her hair, and shading with their thick fringes her large blue eyes, and thought that such a lovely vision had never before met her sight, or even crossed her imagination. Her astonishment equalled her admiration, and she remained so long silent that at last Evelyn was roused from her abstraction by the very silence of her companion. She raised her eyes, and saw that Anne was looking at her in a manner which would have plainly showed what she was thinking of, even if Evelyn had been less used to see that unmistakable impression produced by her beauty; but it did strike her that she had never known so kindly or so charming a manifestation of that feeling in any face she had ever yet beheld, and she could not help blushing and smiling.

Anne longed then to kiss her, and

was just going to do so, but the English girl got up from the couch without turning towards her. Anne said nothing. Her mother had warned her of the coldness and reserve of English manners, and she began to arrange some of Evelyn's things, and to make her as comfortable as she could without any attempt at conversation. She thought this would be the best way of setting her at her ease.

And, indeed, Evelyn's stiffness proceeded rather from shyness than from coldness, and arose from the habit of constantly living with persons afflicted with that singular malady so common amongst English people, and which we own seems to us oftener to arise from pride, fearful of committing itself, than from humility, to which at first it seems akin. The best thing for timid people of this kind is to be with those who have

none of that sort of diffidence. Anne was perfectly free from it. She thought very little of herself, and still less of what others thought of her. All she did and said was marked by the ease and freedom which arises from forgetfulness of self. It would have been difficult not to feel comfortable with Anne. Evelyn's embarrassment diminished as she watched her kind face and unaffected manner. She had begun by answering yes or no to her remarks, but at last she volunteered to say herself, "How good your mother seems!"

Anne turned towards her with a bright smile. "Oh yes, she is so good; and it is good of you to have felt it at once."

"No," Evelyn answered, "there was no goodness in that; but it was so nice of her to say exactly what she did. It was unlike what I expected."

“In what way?” Anne asked, for she did not remember what her mother had said to their young guest.

“I did not expect her to be what she is, or to speak as she did.” And then Evelyn stopped short, a little distressed at what she had said, and looked at Anne as if to apologize. And again she saw that sweet expression which had charmed her so much before, and gratified her love of admiration; but now there was so great a look of sympathy in Anne’s countenance, that by a wonderful departure from her usual habits she bent towards her and met the embrace which Anne was longing, but hesitating, to give. The ice was broken, and both the girls felt that their first interview had ended in a very pleasant manner.

CHAPTER IX.

UP to that time Anne had lived a good deal alone, at least as regarded companions of her own age. The three or four young persons in the neighbourhood who now and then called with their parents at the chalet, had received an education so very different from her own that they had no common subjects of interest, and their visits had been for her rather a burden than a resource. She was therefore particularly disposed to accept with eagerness an intimacy such as seemed likely to arise between her and Evelyn Devereux, whose manners were irresistibly attractive when

her first reserve wore off, and whose wonderful beauty also fascinated her. It is unjust to pretend that envy is the feeling which women generally entertain towards a very lovely person of their own sex. Admiration and sympathy are just as often called forth. Anne at any rate was perfectly free from the former sentiment, and she was so captivated by Evelyn's attractive qualities that she answered very enthusiastically the Abbé Gabriel's questions about Miss Devereux. Her old friend did not feel sorry that she should have at that moment so opportune a distraction from painful thoughts.

A few days after her new companion's arrival, Anne was dressing as fast as she could, for it was Sunday, and getting late. She did not notice at first the unwonted disturbance in the countenance of Jeanneton, who acted as

her lady's maid. She must have perceived it had she looked at her, for it was only on rare and important occasions that the serenity of her handmaid's blue eyes and pink-and-white face was disturbed by any unusual expression. But Anne, engrossed by her own thoughts and hurrying to get ready, took no heed of the phenomenon till, as she was holding out her hand for her gloves and her prayer-book, she happened to glance at her rustic attendant, and exclaimed, "Good gracious! what is the matter, Jeanneton?"

She had no sooner uttered the words than Jeanneton burst into tears. At first she did not speak; but at last, in answer to her mistress's repeated questions, she sobbed out the words, "Oh, Mademoiselle Anne, did you know it?"

“ Know what? What is the matter? What has happened?” Anne asked, surprised and almost frightened.

“ That those fine ladies won’t set their foot in the church—that Madame Miss Morris says that Mass —— Oh, dear me, it is too shocking to repeat.” And Jeanneton covered her face with her hands. “ They want to go and hear some other Mass than M. le Curé’s. And then Madame Miss says that we ought to fast on Sundays. Who ever heard of such a thing? That we ought to eat nothing but cold meat, and light no fire in the kitchen! Oh, I can’t tell you all she said—such a number of dreadful things—I can’t make head or tail of them. But I did not know there were people like that. It makes me quite sick. I feel so frightened I don’t know what to do with myself. I have

been all in a tremble and crying my eyes out since last night."

Anne listened attentively, and sorrowfully too, to this long speech, for Jeanneton's words had forcibly reminded her of what she knew indeed, but had not hitherto very deeply thought of. The tears came into her eyes, but she restrained them, and kindly taking hold of her servant's hand, she said, "Well now, dear Jeanneton, listen and I will tell you how it is. There are, indeed, and especially in foreign countries even more than in our own, people who do not belong to our religion, and who do not like it just because they do not know it. Miss Morris and her mistress have this misfortune. You understand, dear, it is a great misfortune, but it is not their fault; we must not blame them, and we must not do anything to vex them. The best

thing we can do is to ask God very often, and very much, that the day may come when they, and all those who love Him, and everybody in the world, may belong to his true Church, and have only one faith, and then try to be very good and obliging, and pious, as our Catechism teaches; because, you see, if we want them to love our religion, we must endeavour to make them love us. You may be sure that if they see you doing anything wrong they will think it is M. le Curé's fault."

This last idea made Jeanneton laugh. "Well, if that is not a queer notion!" she said.

Anne, seeing that she had brightened up, hastened downstairs without going into Evelyn's room, and, joining her parents in the hall, went with them to church.

She could not help feeling sad during Mass, and after she came home, for she had never before known much of anyone not of her own religion. It was the first time that she had been powerfully attracted by a strong sympathy on the one hand, and separated on the other from the object of that sympathy by what seemed to her an abyss.

Evelyn Devereux spent the morning in her own room, but she agreed to take a walk in the afternoon with Anne, who came to fetch her after Vespers. She found her reading a Bible, magnificently bound, and bearing her initials embossed in gold and enamel. Evelyn laid it down by the side of a still more gorgeous prayer book, and went to put on her things.

Whilst she was getting ready, Anne looked at the two books with a sorrowful interest. The smallest of the two was

bound in tortoiseshell and ivory, and had magnificent silver clasps. It was lying open on the table, so that she could see the first blank page as well as one side of the cover, on which the letters V. L. were engraved in blue enamel on a small gold plate. The following words were written in English on the blank page :—" In remembrance of Tuesday, the 15th of February, V. L." Evelyn came up to the table and clasped the book. Anne blushed as if she had committed an indiscretion, and was almost inclined to apologize for having read those words ; but as Evelyn did not seem conscious she had done so, she thought it better to be silent.

It was a beautiful afternoon, and the two girls walked for the first time into the park of Villiers. The trees were beginning to sprout, but did not hide, as

in summer, the view of the house, which, later in the year, was concealed by their thick foliage. As soon as Evelyn saw the handsome front of the chateau, she exclaimed, "What a magnificent house!"

"I am so glad you admire it," Anne replied. "They told me the country places in England were so beautiful that you would think nothing of Villiers. Of course, I think it magnificent; but then I have never seen any other house of that kind."

"It would be impossible not to be struck with it," Evelyn said, quickening her pace as they entered the avenue. "We certainly have beautiful places in England; but this one is quite in a different style. I only know one country-house in England at all like it. I remember hearing that it was built in imitation of the finest French chateaux, and

that the gardens were laid out by Lenôtre. It is Lord de G——'s place in Bedfordshire."

Anne enjoyed her companion's admiration, and took pleasure in hearing her praise the place she was so fond of. "This side of the castle," she said, "was burnt in 1680, and rebuilt in the style of that century, which is quite different from the architecture on the other side of the house. This is like the palace at Versailles, I am told. But as the entrance-door was a very perfect specimen of the thirteenth century, and the old armoury in the hall was full of curious carvings, they thought it better to let it remain as it was than to pull it down and rebuild it in keeping with the new part of the building."

"They were quite right," Evelyn said; "it makes it much more pic-

turesque. I have never seen anything like it anywhere. You did not tell me half enough of its beauty."

"The fact is, that having always lived here, I have not had any opportunity of comparing Villiers with other places, and so I am always afraid I may overrate it."

"Have you never left Villiers?"

"Never for more than a few days, and then only to pay visits to some of our neighbours, whose places are not, I assure you, at all like this."

"Now," Evelyn said, "let us talk a little. I want to know something about the chateau, and those who live in it."

"But I suppose you know already all about them?"

"No; I really know very little, indeed, about them, or of the circumstances which brought about my coming here—quite

absurdly little. I do not mind saying so now that I feel at my ease with you. But do you know that my aunt did not at all like me to pay this visit?"

"I suspected as much," Anne said.

"She was so angry when my father wrote and told her that he wished me to be sent here, that she spoke very unkindly about him, and I told her I would not stay in the room if she said such things. For several days I was as cross as possible; and just because she did not want me to go to Villiers I made up my mind that I would."

"And so it is your own doing that you came here?"

"Yes, I was determined my aunt should not have her own way, and I wanted to punish her for having said such odious things about my father. But all the time I knew scarcely anything

about those friends of papa's whom he wanted me to visit. He had sometimes mentioned the Marquis de Villiers's name in his letters, but I was so young when I came away that he seemed to forget that I was getting older, and always wrote to me very affectionately indeed, but as if I was still a child."

The two girls had by this time reached the parterre under the terrace; they sat down on one of the stone benches. Evelyn went on. "Then came the news of papa's death. I cannot tell you how miserable it made me—how desolate I felt. I had not seen him for nine years, and I did so love him. Ever since I had been parted from him I had felt a sort of bitterness at the thought that other children had their fathers with them, and that I was growing up at a distance from mine. I felt as if it must be some-

body's fault that we were not together. I used to ask why he had gone to that hot odious India, and had a sort of notion that I was cheated of the happiness of being with him. But then I was always looking forward to his coming to England—hoping, thinking, wishing for it ; I did so want him to come. And then, instead of that, to hear that he would never come back—that I should never see him again ! ”

Evelyn stopped, choked by her sobs, and Anne, with tears in her eyes, put her arm round her waist, and kissed her without speaking. When she had recovered her voice, Evelyn went on—

“ My first wish and thought was to do as he had wished. I wanted to set off at once ; but, in the first place, I was ill for some time, and then it was not only my aunt that tried to persuade me

not to come here. Others, whose opinions I cared for more than for hers, were also against it." She blushed a little, hesitated, and then continued—"But I could not get my father's letter out of my head. His dearest friends had invited me here. Those who wanted to prevent this visit had not loved him, nor had he loved them. It was with his friends I wanted to be; with those who grieved for his death, and would speak to me about him. That was my only feeling, and, in spite of all they could say, I set off. And indeed, dear Anne"—(this Evelyn added after a moment of silence)—"your mother's first words to me, the way in which she said, 'your father,' touched me more than anything I had ever heard from Lady Cecilia. Oh, I am so fond of your mother! But now I want you to tell me when

exactly did the Marquis de Villiers die ? ”

“ It was just about the same time that you lost your father. ”

“ And to whom does this beautiful place belong now ? ”

“ To his son. ”

“ Oh, he left a son ? ”

“ Yes. ”

“ Is he young ? ”

“ Yes. ”

“ Does he live here ? ”

“ Not at this moment. ”

“ But he used to do so in his father’s lifetime ? ”

“ Oh, yes, he came here very often, ” Anne answered, smiling in spite of herself.

“ How came you not to have mentioned this before ? ”

“ Have not I mentioned him ? ” Anne

said, seeming much surprised. She was silent a minute, and then, blushing a little, added, "Well, I suppose I did not mention Guy, but I ought to have done so, for I am very fond of him, and we have been almost brought up together."

"How long has he been gone?" Evelyn asked.

"He went away a month ago."

"When will he come back?"

"I don't know."

Then Anne looked at her watch, and put an end to this cross-examination by exclaiming, "It is half-past five, and we dine at six. It is Sunday, too, and M. le Curé is always very exact."

"M. le Curé!" Evelyn exclaimed, with a look of amazement and almost of terror. "What! a priest—a Catholic priest—dines with you to-day!"

Anne laughed. "Yes, my dear Eve-

lyn, M. le Curé always dines with us on Sundays, and often on other days. I ought to have broken it to you before. But, however, if you really cannot bear to meet our old friend, I have no doubt your dinner can be carried up to your own room. But we must make haste and get home, for to keep him waiting is one of the few things I would not do even to please you.”

CHAPTER X.

EVELYN had gone up to her room rather discomposed, and half inclined to take advantage of the offer of dining alone; but, after some hesitation, she made up her mind to face the enemy—not, however, till the last moment; and as she came into the drawing-room, Sylvain was opening the doors of the dining-room and announcing that dinner was ready. Her manner displayed a sort of defiant dignity, calculated to keep at a distance the unwelcome guest, and to make him understand at once that it would be vain to try and delude her by his wiles. As she left her room, she had

glanced at the initials on her prayer-book, and she called to mind the words which had accompanied that present—"Above all things, beware of their priests." Other words had been uttered at the same time, which had served to impress these very forcibly on her mind, and she resolved to act in the manner which this absent counsellor would have recommended. We do not venture to surmise what would have been the feelings of this unknown individual could he have seen Evelyn an hour after that majestic entrance sitting by the side of the Abbé Gabriel, and listening with the deepest interest to what he was saying. The old Curé and the Protestant young lady had at once become intimate, and seemed to take equal pleasure in the conversation they were holding together. How had this won-

derful change been brought about? What had so suddenly destroyed Evelyn's pre-concerted resolutions?

The Curé had been for his part perfectly unconscious of her hostile demeanour. It was the first time he had been to the chalet since Guy's departure. His thoughts were quite engrossed by his dear children, as he called him and Anne, and he was so absent that, incredible as she would have deemed it, he had hardly looked at Evelyn till dinner was nearly over. But when M. Severin filled his glass, and said, with a smile, to his young guest, "Allow me, Miss Devereux, to drink your health in the English fashion," the Curé turned towards her in a kind and friendly manner, and said, "And I also drink to your health, young lady. Your father, Mr. Henry Devereux, was my friend, and one of the best

friends of my youth. I hope his daughter will permit me not to look upon her as a stranger.”

Evelyn was thoroughly astonished. Her love for her father was the strongest feeling of her heart, and the grief for his loss the uppermost thought in her mind. Though she liked M. Severin, and was getting fond of Anne, Madame Severin was the one of the family she most cared for, because she was the one who had known her father; but to find in the person of a Catholic priest an old and attached friend of that beloved parent, took her altogether by surprise, and she had not been able to collect her thoughts sufficiently to make any reply before M. Severin had offered her his arm to return to the drawing-room. As to the Curé, he did not take any notice of the changes in Evelyn's countenance.

The recollections of Elm Cottage, and of those who were associated in his mind with the early days of his priesthood, had always been dear to him, and he liked to dwell on the memory of that little circle of friends, who were now all dead except himself and Madame Severin. Therefore, when Evelyn, overcoming her shyness and her prejudices, ventured to ask him a few questions, he entered upon the subject with readiness, and supplied the young girl with details which gratified to the utmost her affectionate curiosity. Madame Severin was not as fond as the Abbé Gabriel of talking of that time. To him, these reminiscences were a positive enjoyment, and he had not had for a long time so good an opportunity of indulging in them. Evelyn, on the other hand, craved for details, and multiplied her questions.

The Curé, full of the thoughts of the past, and carried back to its interesting associations, was nothing loath to answer them, and Evelyn drew from him without difficulty the history of her father's intimacy with the family at Elm Cottage, and of its influence over his life and fate. She learnt for the first time, in this way, what had been the cause of his departure from England, and his choice of a career which separated him, as it proved, for ever from his country and his friends.

Evelyn devoured every word the Curé uttered, and when he ceased speaking, looked up at the picture over the chimney, and exclaimed, "And so it was that beautiful Marquise who drove him away from England! She, then, was the cause of his living and dying at a distance from me—of my never seeing him again!"

The way in which she spoke startled the Abbé Gabriel, and he regretted having said what she had taken up with a sort of resentment. He remained silent for a moment, and so did she. He was afraid of having committed an indiscretion. At last, in a gentle and almost humble manner, he said to her, "My dear young lady, you have made me talk as if I was thinking aloud. I have trespassed, I fear, on your good nature, and I beg your pardon for having been so garrulous."

Evelyn answered, in a respectful manner, "On the contrary, M. le Curé, I have to thank you for one of the greatest pleasures I have ever had. I cannot feel coldly towards any friend of my father's, and certainly not towards one who has told me so much about him, and given me so many interesting

details about his early life." She rose and moved away, very much pleased with her new acquaintance. The Curé, on the contrary, did not feel quite satisfied, and watched her countenance with some uneasiness. She had gone near the pianoforte, and he saw her gazing on the picture of the Marquise de Villiers with a peculiar expression. As she sat looking at it, her hands wandered unconsciously over the keys. She played some chords, the sound of which seemed to startle her, for, as if shocked at what she had done, she blushed, and hastily moved away from the pianoforte.

Those few notes, however, had caught Madame Severin's ear. Herself an excellent musician, she had no trouble to discern that they had been struck by a careless, but not unpractised hand. "Oh, please do not leave the pianoforte," she

cried; and Anne, who also was passionately fond of music, got up, and taking hold of Evelyn's hand, playfully tried to lead her back to the instrument. But it was her turn to blush when Evelyn pulled her hands away, and with a very grave face sat down by the fire-side. Anne also looked grave, for she now guessed the reason of Evelyn's abrupt refusal, and the whole party seemed rather distressed.

The Abbé Gabriel then went to the music-stand, and selected out of the pieces of music it contained one which he brought to Evelyn, and in a smiling and kind way he said, "To-day is Sunday, Miss Devereux, and you wish to practise, and to make us all practise, a little penance. Well, I do not want to say anything for or against it, but I wish you would do me a favour

which will not go against your conscience."

Evelyn glanced with displeasure at the piece of music in his hand, and her face resumed the hostile expression it had worn before dinner. The Curé saw and understood it, but said, "If you will look at this piece, I do not think you will have any objection to sing it." Evelyn turned her head away, and waved her hand in token of refusal.

"You cannot suppose," the Abbé Gabriel said, in a grave manner, "that I would ask you to do what you would think wrong? I happen to know that this air of Handel's, and the words which are set to it, would be considered everywhere to be in keeping with your ideas of the sort of music suitable for a Sunday evening." He stopped an instant, and added, "No; though this was

your father's favourite air, I should not have asked you to sing it if it had not been sacred music."

"Was my father fond of this?" Evelyn asked, seizing on the piece of music.

"Yes; he was always asking for it."

"Asking that Marquise to sing it, I suppose!" Evelyn exclaimed, glancing resentfully at the picture.

"There, again!" the Curé thought, "I had better have held my tongue."

Evelyn went to the piano, and said, "I wonder if I shall sing it as well as she did." Then, placing her hands on the keys, she began at once, for there was no prelude, singing words beginning thus, "*Lascia ch'io pianga la dura sorte.*"

At the sound of her voice, Madame Severin and Anne involuntarily rose.

The Curé looked up surprised; and even M. Severin, who had for the last half hour been deeply engaged with a newspaper, raised his eyes and listened. Evelyn had one of those voices which we do not hear perhaps more than once or twice in the course of our lives, and that seem to lift us up, as it were, above this earth. She was quite conscious of the possession of this gift, as well as of all her other advantages. A smile hovered on her lips whilst she sang; and when the song was ended, it was with evident satisfaction that she received the thanks of the little audience, whom she did not quite expect to find so worthy of her talent. To them, it was an event to hear such music. She saw this was the case, and, though accustomed to admiration, felt flattered at the effect she had produced. There is a strange sympathy

between those who perform and those who listen to music—one more easily felt than described. A look, a word faintly uttered, or even an expressive silence, often convey this impression more effectually than the most vehement applause, and give the artist a pleasure beyond the mere sense of success. Evelyn experienced something of the sort after singing that evening. Her countenance became serene, and all clouds seemed to vanish away from her mind. She begged Anne to sing, which she did, simply and well. Her voice was sweet and clear, though by no means to be compared with Evelyn's; but the two harmonized very well, and they sang together several pieces of sacred music. Evelyn was delighted, and anticipated much enjoyment from the discovery of their mutual love of music.

Anne went up to her room pleased that the evening had after all gone off so well, and that Evelyn and the Curé were friends; but she had other anxious thoughts. Throwing open her window, she stood gazing on the sky, as she was always in the habit of doing when she particularly wanted to think or to pray. And that night she did want to commune with herself—to question her own heart. When Evelyn had asked her if she knew Guy, and if she liked him, why had she blushed, and then felt that she had turned pale? Why had she not written to Guy since he had gone away, as she always used to do? Why had she so much trouble to follow the Curé's advice, which at first had seemed so easy and pleasant? She rested her hands on the railing of her little balcony. The night which had succeeded that

early spring day was cold and hazy. Her gaze seemed to penetrate beyond the dim outline of the veiled landscape. Her countenance, her attitude, everything about her, seemed to indicate the pursuit of some thought she was determined to detect and to master. At last she sat down at her table and wrote a letter, which, after reading it over very attentively, she sealed and directed. When this was accomplished, kneeling where she could see the sky and the stars, she said her night prayers, with her eyes and her heart raised far above this world.

CHAPTER XI.

FRANZ FRANK'S lodging in Paris was at the top of a house which looked on the gardens of the Luxembourg. He occupied the whole of the highest floor. The three rooms to the south he had thrown into one, and changed into a large studio. One part of this space was, however, divided from the other by a curtain, and called the drawing-room, because it was free from easels, lay figures, stretched canvas, and unfinished sketches; not, in short, in the glorious disorder which is considered the attribute of artists, little as it has often to do with art. That side of the studio had a separate

door, and those of Franz's visitors whom he did not admit to his sanctum came that way. What with a couch and arm-chair, books on the table, and plenty of sunshine, that partitioned saloon was pleasant enough. The curtainless window freely admitted the light, and looked on the green foliage and beautiful gardens of the Luxembourg.

Franz was not, as the Marquis de Villiers had said, the son of a Jewish usurer. His father was a Jew indeed, but an honest tradesman of Mannheim—not at all rich, but much respected in his native town. He had renounced Judaism in order to marry the pretty daughter of the chapel-master, Wolf Barkheim, but he had requested to become *only* a Protestant, which had been agreed to on condition that his and Thecla's children should be brought up

Catholics ; and, with this stipulation, the marriage took place, rather against the wish of the chapel-master, who would have desired for his youngest daughter as brilliant a match as he considered his eldest daughter had made when she married M. Lamigny. At Mannheim, this alliance was supposed to be a wonderful stroke of fortune, and Mdlle. Barkheim to have attained the height of worldly grandeur. A Frenchman, and an *émigré*, was of course a great nobleman, and after M. and Madame Lamigny had left the country this impression still prevailed. When, after the lapse of eight or ten years, she returned as a widow to her native place, there did not appear any notable signs of the great position she was supposed to occupy, though she seemed, nevertheless, very comfortably off. Not so her poor sister. Thecla who

was sinking at that moment under the weight of a series of misfortunes. Poverty and fatigue had brought her to the grave. Her husband did not long survive her, and good Madame Lamigny arrived just in time to take charge of little Franz, who would have been otherwise quite abandoned. She brought him back to France with her, and he remained entirely under her care. She was fully aware of her own incapacity to educate her nephew; she could neither manage him nor teach him. She therefore sent him to college, and though he did not apparently succeed in his studies, and had no prizes to boast of when he came home for the holidays, she was not the less enraptured to see him, nor did she cease to prophesy future triumphs for her darling.

Franz was, meanwhile, but a poor scholar. Absent, inattentive, and idle,

he seemed to care for nothing but history—which was badly taught at his college—and poetry, his taste for which he could only indulge by poring during play hours over an odd volume of Schiller. Continually punished by his masters, and teased and laughed at by his companions, he was nevertheless a favourite with them all, though looked upon as stupid, and ready to believe it of himself. His aunt's persevering faith in his abilities alone kept him from despairing of his own capacity ; and this state of things continued, till at last, in a manner quite unforeseen, her predictions were suddenly realized. A portfolio, in which Franz carefully concealed the drawings which he used to make chiefly during the hours of study, fell into the hands of the college authorities. When he saw the fatal collection in his professor's possession, he gave himself up for lost ; and, though

more than fifteen years of age, the tears came into his eyes, and he was about to promise "never to do it again," when to his extreme surprise he heard the professor, who happened to be a good judge of art, exclaim, "But this is not talent only—there is genius in these sketches."

From that moment Franz's line was taken, and at twenty-five years of age he was already a distinguished painter. What was his outward lot we have seen. As to his thoughts, his opinions, and his feelings, he seldom gave them utterance; and if his works revealed the inward fire burning in his soul, his words scarcely ever betrayed its existence. His voice was low and sweet; his language measured, and never remarkable except when some sudden emotion powerfully excited him. He worshipped his art with all the strength of his genius,

and, though he could succeed without effort, he spared no pains to excel. This passionate love of a noble pursuit had been his safeguard, and had to a certain degree supplied the place of religious principles, which he did not possess. His childhood had been in contact with three different creeds, and in consequence he grew up with no definite belief; but he did not display or exult in this scepticism—on the contrary, he was rather ashamed of it than otherwise. He admired the earnest and deep faith of the Christians of past ages—he envied those who possessed it in our days; and this was one of the reasons of his respect and affection for Guy. Though he did not yet believe in Christianity, he loved those who did. His virtues were leading him to faith, whereas Guy's faith was leading him to virtue.

Franz was one morning painting in his studio, when the door of what he called his drawing-room opened, and even before the curtain was drawn aside, he recognized Guy by his step. Generally he came in straight by the private door of the studio, but he did not seem in so great a hurry as usual to meet Franz, whereas Franz, on the contrary, had apparently been anxiously expecting him, for he threw away his palette and brushes, and rushed into the little saloon to meet him. "Well, what was the result of the visit?" he eagerly inquired.

Guy seated himself by the window, with his hands in his pockets, and his head turned the other way. Franz repeated his question. "I did not pay the visit," Guy answered, shortly.

Franz drew entirely back the curtain which separated the drawing-room from

the studio, and went back to his easel. In a few minutes he said, raising his voice a little, "I suppose you will presently tell me why you did not go?"

"Presently," Guy replied; and after another long silence he walked slowly into the studio, took off his hat, which he put in a fit of absence on the head of a Venus of Milo, and then stood leaning against the wall with his hands crossed on his chest. At last he said, "I changed my mind about calling on M. de St. Roger."

"And why so? He was expecting and wishing to see you."

"On second thoughts, I made up my mind that I did not care about going with him; so I wrote to say that he had better look out for another travelling companion. He will easily find one."

"Of course he will," Franz answered.

“There will be plenty of people ready to jump at the opportunity of visiting the East with so learned and agreeable a man. And may I ask why you changed your mind?”

“Because I did not wish to go,” Guy answered, in a dogged manner.

“Oh, well! in that case there is nothing more to be said,” Franz replied.

“What did you do last night?”

“I went to d’Hérion’s, whom I met after leaving my note at M. de St. Roger’s.”

“And did you play?”

“Yes.”

“And lost?”

“No; won, I am sorry to say.”

“What do you mean?” Franz asked, looking surprised.

“I did not want to win. I was absent, and played very badly; but a

cursed run of luck brought all the good cards into my hands, and I found myself pocketing the money of a poor wretch who was evidently miserable at losing it, and who ought not, I am afraid, to have risked it. As we were going down stairs I did so long to give it back to him. I do not care about play, but sometimes I feel such a want of excitement; and it seemed to me so stupid yesterday to go off alone with M. de St. Roger. Franz, I am quite afraid that I shall say what I have thought other people such fools for saying, ‘Life is a burthen to me!’ I do not mean that there are not moments in which it seems to me very fascinating — when every kind of temptation, as we Christians call those fascinations, present themselves thickly enough; but when it comes to the point—well, I always feel

that it is, after all, more satisfactory to conquer than to indulge passions. There are falls which some people call by other names, but which, as far as I am concerned, would always appear to me like defeat and disgrace."

"You have a strong and generous soul, Guy. No mean passions will ever keep it in thrall. If they were to rise for a moment, you would always know how to subdue them."

"Always, do you think? Well, perhaps so, with God's help; and when I use that expression, you know I really mean what I say. Indeed, a few hours spent with M. le Vicomte d'Hérion are of infinite service to me in that respect. Oh, those men of the world, those dandies, those 'lions,' as they call them now!" Guy began to walk impatiently up and down the room. "I cannot

describe what an aversion I have for that fellow. How he bores me with his long stories all about himself, and his insufferable conceit. He despises everything he ought to respect, and knows nothing he ought to know. Oh, no; wickedness of that kind has no attractions for me."

Franz was listening attentively to what Guy was saying, but did not make any comments. He liked to hear him think aloud, and to be silent himself; but it was an expressive silence, full of sympathy and intelligence. His friend always knew he was listening to him, and feeling with him.

"No," Guy went on, "it is not what goes by the name of pleasure that is a danger for me. My real danger would be to fall foolishly in love—madly in love—to waste my heart, my life, nay,

lose my soul, perhaps, through a wild, extravagant passion." Franz bent his head in token of assent. "And it was on that account," Guy added, in a tone of bitterness, "that I wanted, at the very outset, to bind myself to a pure and holy love. I did not care to go and run all over the world after happiness, but to secure at once what had been my earliest, sweetest, and dearest idea of it——" He stopped short, and his eyes happened to glance at the picture which Franz was working at. "What is that picture?" he asked.

"It is an order I had some time ago at Rome, for the chapel of a convent. I get on slowly, for I only take it up at long intervals."

"It is very beautiful," Guy said.

"No; not beautiful a bit," Franz answered. "It is very bad." And

throwing down his brushes, he sat down before his easel, looking at his work with a dissatisfied expression. "I know, I feel it is bad. Look at that copy of the Madonna of John of Fiesole, against the wall there. Only look at that face! We should not have thought it perhaps a very beautiful or pretty one, had we met it on earth; and yet it is scarcely possible to look at that picture and not wish to kneel before it. Where, I wonder, did the painter find that mysterious and divine expression, which he cannot have seen in any living model?"

"I have no doubt he found it, my dear Franz, where you cannot find it, because you have not the faith he had. Faith was the secret of his genius."

Franz coloured a little, and answered, "When not to believe is a suffering, ought not that suffering, like any other

pain, to purify the soul, and to give it some of those lights which the great masters of my art have found in their faith? I quite admit, you know, that they did so, and for that very reason I look up to them with admiration."

"But really," Guy said, "you are unjust to yourself. There is something very beautiful in this picture. The expression of the eyes, the shape of the head——" He stopped, and then exclaimed, "But I say, Franz—that look! I did not know at first why it struck me so much—but it is Anne's look. Those are her features, her countenance. If she had sat for it, it could not be more like!"

"Do you think so?" Franz said, with a little embarrassment.

"Of course I do. Come, Franz, you

cannot deny the likeness. Is it an accident, or did you intend it ?”

Franz did not answer at once. He considered a little, and then said, “Neither one nor the other, I think. I did not exactly intend to draw a portrait; but in reviewing with the eyes of my soul, as our dear Shakespeare says, the most celestial countenances which could help me to compose this picture, it is not wonderful that a poor wretch, who cannot raise his eyes above this earth, should have depicted, as it were unconsciously, the most heavenly countenance which has ever come across him in this world.”

“You are quite right,” Guy replied. “I could almost say of Anne what you did just now of the Madonna of Fra Angelico. There is nothing majestic or grand about her, and yet one would like to kneel at her feet.”

“Her whole soul is revealed in the expression of her eyes,” Franz said.

“Yes,” Guy answered, with some agitation; “and therefore the feelings she inspires are unlike any other feelings of the sort; and one has a right to expect from her what could hardly be looked for in others.”

“What do you mean?” Franz asked.

“I mean, that it would make me more unhappy if she left off loving me as a brother, than that she should have refused to marry me. Generally, when a disappointment of this kind occurs, it is impossible for any other feeling to continue and subsist; but this is not the case with Anne, or with me. I hardly know how to make you understand what I mean. I cannot do without Anne. She is necessary to me. If I cannot have her for my wife, I must have her for a

friend. She is to me a sort of second conscience ; and since I have lost sight of her, and that she has left off writing to me, as she always used to do, I have doubts about myself, and miserable thoughts, which almost drive me to despair. Yesterday, as you know, I wanted to travel off to the end of the world ; to-day, I cannot endure the thought of going. I must see her, and talk to her."

Both the young men were gazing on the picture, which seemed to grow life-like under the silent gaze of the one and the excited words of the other. It was really a wonderful picture. "I feel as if she were here !" Guy exclaimed ; "and as if she could hear me."

A knock at the door interrupted this contemplation. Franz's servant came in with a letter, which M. le Marquis's valet

had brought for his master. Guy took it in a careless manner, but as soon as he caught sight of the writing, he exclaimed, "Franz, I declare ! Here is a wonder. Your picture actually works miracles. I was dying to see her handwriting again, and here is a letter from Anne."

CHAPTER XII.

EVELYN was at the pianoforte, humming, one after the other, the airs of *Il Pirata*, Bellini's last opera, whilst Anne, sitting at the window, was admiring the beautiful hues of the setting sun, and enjoying that lovely music which now for the first time had reached the chalet. Rossini was still in all the height of his fame, and Bellini, his young successor, just beginning to be known. The admirers of the first, the older amateurs of that day, held, indeed, the new composer very cheap ; and we willingly admit that their great maestro will ever remain the most famous of the two. But for the contem-

poraries of Anne Severin, Bellini is the favourite songster, whose melodies seem to embody their youthful emotions. It is to them what Dante said of Virgil's poetry, "the wide stream of language," harmoniously expressing the feelings of their hearts, and in after years conjuring up sweet or sad memories, according as time has dealt with the hopes, the joys, and the dreams of the past.

It had rained all day, but towards evening the clouds had passed away, and the sun was setting with such splendour that its rays illuminated the little drawing-room, and threw a singularly vivid radiance on the picture over the chimney.

Evelyn suddenly stopped playing, and exclaimed, "What a strange effect of light. Do you see it, Anne?"

No, Anne had been looking the other way, and when she turned round the light

Evelyn, who was sitting on the music-stool with her back to her, suddenly turned round, without, however, leaving her seat, and was thus brought opposite to the window and near Anne, whose profile and figure stood in relief against the sky, where the hues of the departing sun were still lingering. "Come, tell me the truth, Anne," she said, "this young man whom you have known all your life, whom you are very fond of, and whom you think so very handsome, are you not going to be married to him?"

If there had been light enough for Evelyn to see the face of her friend, she would perhaps have been very sorry for the pain her indiscretion inflicted, for not only did Anne become crimson, but there was a look of suffering in her countenance. She recovered herself,

however, very quickly, and answered in words strikingly similar to those her father had used on a similar occasion. "My dear Evelyn, I should be very angry if anybody but you had supposed such a thing. No, I certainly am not going to be married to the Marquis de Villiers. I love him as a brother; but my ever marrying him is quite out of the question."

"Indeed!" Evelyn said, rather surprised.

"Yes, quite out of the question. So if you wish to lay siege to his heart, you are quite at liberty to do so; you will not find in me a rival." She affected to laugh, but no sooner had those last words passed her lips than she felt a sort of remorse. It seemed as if she had uttered an untruth. But there was no time to dwell upon the thought, for

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Evelyn immediately replied, in a way she did not at all expect, "Oh, as to me, it would be equally out of the question. I will tell you a secret, Anne ; I know you will not betray my confidence." She lowered her voice, and whispered, "I am engaged to be married."

Anne's surprise was great, but it was greater still when Evelyn added, "And, indeed, the Marquis de Villiers's likeness to his mother would be enough to set him against me ; I quite hate the sight of that fair Marquise."

Sylvain came in just then with the lamp in his hand. Evelyn started up, exclaiming that she had barely time to dress for dinner, leaving Anne in perfect astonishment. She had been surprised first by Evelyn's abrupt question, and then by her equally abrupt announcement of her engagement ; but the last

words she had said, beyond anything else, had amazed and distressed her. She held nothing more sacred and dear than the memory of Guy's mother. She remembered her as a vision of grace and beauty which had vanished from this world on a day hallowed by the sweetest and holiest recollections. The two impressions, that of hers and Guy's first approach to the altar of God, and the death of his fair and gentle mother, were for ever connected together in her mind. No terror was associated with that peaceful end; no doubt as to the place of that pure spirit's abode entered the minds of the children, and the name of "angel," so often given to Charlotte in the days of her youth, was then applied to her by childish and loving lips with all the simplicity of youthful faith. What Evelyn had said sounded, therefore,

almost like blasphemy in Anne's ears, and gave her for the moment a feeling of aversion to her.

The post, which arrived at the chalet towards the end of breakfast the next morning, brought Anne a letter from Guy. She was expecting it, and so took it from her father's hands without any apparent emotion. As she was reading it, however, her colour went and came, and she glanced to see whether Evelyn was watching her; but Miss Devereux had likewise received a letter, and, as soon as she saw the handwriting, had hurried away from the table, and stood by the window absorbed in its contents. Anne had, therefore, only the brunt of her mother's eyes to encounter, and their loving inspection she never wanted to escape from. As soon as she had finished reading Guy's letter, she handed it to

Madame Severin, and they both went into the drawing-room.

Guy wrote as follows :—" You did well, very well, to write to me—that is, if you care enough for your old play-fellow to be anxious that he should remain worthy of your friendship. Do you remember, Anne, that when we were children you used to tell me I must be good, because, if I was naughty, it made you cry ? Well, I can assure you, that if you had not been sensible enough to write to me, I should have given you reason to cry more, perhaps, than you suppose. You say that I must promise never to speak to you again *in that way*. Well, then, on your side, you must promise to behave to me exactly as you used to do before that day."

At the end of his letter he spoke of a journey to Italy with Franz, but added:

“Before I start, I must go to Villiers for many reasons, but chiefly to see you again, and to take leave of you in a different manner from the last time.”

Madame Severin read the letter through, and then gave it back to her daughter. They went into the garden, and walked up and down. After a few minutes' silence, she said, “Then I suppose we shall soon see him again.”

“Yes. I am very glad he is coming,” Anne replied ; “after we have been together for a few days, this tiresome feeling of constraint between us will pass away. Yes,” she added, after a pause, “I am sure it will vanish like a dream.”

Madame Severin did not feel so certain of it, and other thoughts were in her mind. She put her arm round her daughter's waist, and said, “Your father

is vexed when he sees how unhappy Guy is, and you also, dear child."

"What do you mean, mamma?" Anne exclaimed.

"I mean," Madame Severin answered, in a slow, deliberate manner, "that in time, perhaps, he may be inclined to change his mind."

But Anne quickly interrupted her mother. "Oh, do not say that, dearest mamma; you ought not to say so." She stopped for a minute—her heart was beating fast, and she did not want even her mother to hear that her voice trembled. "No, you ought not to say so," she repeated, "for my father is quite right, and if he changed his mind it would be wrong."

Anne was quite sincere in what she said. She had not merely submitted to her father's will; from the moment his

reasons had been explained to her, she had understood and acquiesced in his view of the subject. She had made it her own, and was resolved to adhere to it at any cost. Madame Severin, struck by the earnestness with which she had spoken, said nothing more. In the present state of things it perhaps was fortunate, she thought, that Anne did take so decided a line on that question; and not caring to continue the conversation, she went back to the house, leaving her daughter near the little gate of the garden, where, a few months before, she had so anxiously awaited her father's return on the day of the Marquis de Villiers's death.

All that had occurred since that time was now recurring to her mind. Her mother had been right when she said she could easily have loved Guy more than a

brother, more than a friend. Those few words he had said to her on the evening they had parted, his way of looking and speaking to her, had thrown suddenly a light on her own heart ; she felt that she loved Guy more than she ought or wished to do.

So that now she was obliged to moderate; to subdue even that affection which had hitherto been a part of her life. She had to remain his friend, and not to care for him too much ; to give up his love, and yet cling to his side ; to lose him, and yet continue to act as his guardian angel—the name he had so often given her.

All this was enough to agitate a soul little used to inward troubles and complicated duties. So profound was her fit of musing, that although her eyes were fixed on the path across the meadow, it

was some time before she noticed that the gate of the park of Villiers had opened, and that somebody was coming from it towards the chalet. But the moment she perceived it, Anne guessed rather than saw that it was Guy. Her strength seemed to fail, and she was on the point of turning towards the house, but then the thought occurred, "What used I to do formerly when I saw him coming?" and by a strong effort of the will she opened the gate and walked to meet Guy. Her paleness disappeared as she advanced towards him; he only saw in her face a look of joy such as would have greeted him in old days. She held out her hands, and exclaimed, "And so you are really come, my dearest Guy! What a pleasure it is to see you again, and before we expected you."

Guy had not anticipated this sort of

welcome, and Anne instantly perceived it had wounded him. When they had shaken hands, his hand trembled a little, and in his eyes there was a tender and sweet expression, but it suddenly changed. The most consummate artifice would not have deceived him more as to Anne's feelings than her artless and frank greeting. He did not see through it the generous effort which would have consoled and encouraged him. His expectations were deceived, and letting go her hand, he said, in a voice which sounded harsh and cold, in consequence of the constraint he was putting on himself, "Yes. There has been a change in my plans which hastened my return here, and I left Paris without leaving myself time to write. I have just come, and as I wanted to see your father, I am making my way as quick as I can to the chalet."

Anne's heart sank within her. She was just going to say something which would have betrayed her feelings ; but it was not uttered, and she walked by the side of Guy silently, and with a sorrowful countenance. His brow was dark with clouds, which in former times would have betokened a storm, but now only indicated a hard and trying inward struggle. He too did not speak, for he was resolved not to do so till he could master his irritation. But when they came to the gate of the garden, he at last said, "I must beg you to forgive me, Anne. I was about to break both my promises ; but I will not forget myself again. Good-bye."

"But, Guy, did you not want to speak to my father?" she timidly asked.

"Not now," he answered. "You can tell them, if you like, that I have

arrived, and that I will call in the evening. I promise that you will be satisfied with my behaviour."

He turned away, and disappeared so quickly, that when Anne, who had remained motionless for a few instants, looked back, he was already out of sight.

As she was going slowly upstairs, after having informed her parents of Guy's arrival, it occurred to her that it would be well also to tell Evelyn of it. But she did not find her in her room; she had gone out to walk, as she usually did after finishing her letters, and was probably looking in the park for Anne, who generally went out with her at that time. As she was leaving the room, Anne's eyes fell on a letter lying on the table, sealed, and directed to "Lord Vivian Lyle, Hartleigh House, London."

It immediately struck her that the initials on Evelyn's Bible were V. L. "I suppose he is the person she told me of," passed through her mind, and then she thought no more of it.

CHAPTER XIII.

As Guy was coming home after leaving Anne, he met his groom, who was bringing his horse to the chalet. He got on Samiel's back, who seemed to understand his master's mood at that moment, and dashed off at a pace quite in keeping with his impetuous and undisciplined feelings. Often in his father's lifetime, after some violent scene with him, Guy had thus vented and ridden off, as it were, his vehement irritation. On these occasions he liked to attempt the most hazardous feats, and, in the excitement of the moment, to dwell on the idea of what his father would say if

he should happen to break his neck, and wonder whether he would not in that case reproach himself for his death. These transient thoughts had been severely punished, at the time when he had been compelled with anguish to ask himself a similar question.

And yet, as he was galloping with reckless carelessness on that day, full of resentment against Anne, a thought of that sort shot through his mind. "Suppose I was to fall and break my neck on these stones," he said to himself, "what would be her feelings?" And during the space of an hour he went tearing about the country, thinking of what he called her heartlessness, her coldness, her ingratitude, and making up for the constraint he had put upon himself during their brief interview by abusing her, and murmuring between

his teeth the most reproachful epithets. Samiel did not relax his pace while this fit of passion was raging in his master's breast. He seemed quite prepared to enter into his feelings, and to carry him if he liked to the end of the world. But Guy after a while, came to his senses ; his mood softened, and he felt a little ashamed of having been so nearly flying into a passion with Anne. He pulled up his horse, and turning into a road which led through a wood back to the park of Villiers, he rode on slowly, and began to reflect more dispassionately on what had so much irritated him.

For, after all, what had he so much wished for, what had he so earnestly asked Anne to grant him when he wrote to her from Paris, but to find her just what she had been to him before the day which had suddenly altered the character

of their intercourse? He called this to mind as he was arriving at the furthest gate of the park on the opposite side from the lodge near the chalet.

He got off his horse to open it, and walked on, absorbed in his thoughts, with the bridle hanging loosely on his arm. His reverie was interrupted by suddenly coming, as he turned a corner in the road, upon two large trunks of trees blown down during a recent storm, and lying across the road, so as effectually to block up the way. Guy looked right and left. There was a high hedge on both sides of the alley up to the spot where the trees had fallen. It did not seem to extend much further. He could, indeed, have scrambled over one of those hedges and through the thick underwood back to the road beyond the impediment, but he could not have dragged his horse

after him. The gate he had left behind was already at a considerable distance, and if he had retraced his steps, and gone all the way round, he would not have got home till very late. So he measured with his eye the obstacle in his way. Very often he had jumped over quite as high a fence, but in this case he did not feel quite certain of the nature of the ground on the other side. But after a moment's hesitation, he mentally exclaimed, "Come, I'll run the chance rather than toil all the way round!" and springing into the saddle, he seized the reins, made Samiel curve, and brought him back to the barricade. In a second, horse and rider were both on the other side of the obstacle; but at the same moment Guy heard a scream which showed there was somebody in that alley whom his sudden appearance had fright-

ened. He stopped his horse, and looked about him. At first he could not see any one, but soon he perceived a young girl kneeling on the grass among the trees, and trying to disengage her dress from the furze-bushes in which it was entangled.

Guy went up to her, took off his hat, and apologized for the fright he had given her. The young girl looked up, and at the sight of her face Guy gave a little start. She blushed, and then quickly rising from her knees, and tearing her gown away, she made a bow to him, and hastened down a narrow path immediately opposite to where they stood. Guy remained at the place where she left him, bewildered at this sudden apparition.

The only time he had thought at all of Henry Devereux's daughter, he had

pictured her to himself as a child, and it did not occur to him now that it was she whom he had seen. Everything combined at that moment to give a romantic character to the fair vision which had crossed his path, and to heighten the impression which Evelyn's wonderful beauty made upon him. As he slowly wended his way homeward, all sorts of confused thoughts passed through his mind. A new kind of feeling, an eager curiosity, a strange interest had taken the place of his previous agitation. Anne disappeared as if by magic from his waking dream, or if he thought of her at all, it was in connection with a marvellous fairy tale they used to read together when they were children, and in which was described just such a meeting as had now taken place between him and the beautiful stranger.

Evelyn, on the other hand, had hastened back to the chalet not one whit less excited by her adventure. "I have just had such a fright!" she said to Anne, as she walked into her room.

"Where, and of what sort?" Anne asked, not greatly agitated by the announcement, which was made with a look of evident satisfaction.

"In the park, on the edge of the wood. A young man with large blue eyes and curly brown hair terrified me dreadfully. He and his horse seemed to fall from the skies into the alley where I was walking."

"It must have been Guy," Anne quietly said.

"Guy!" exclaimed Evelyn; "the Marquis de Villiers — is he here, then?"

"Yes, I met him this afternoon; I

went to your room to tell you so, but you were flown."

Evelyn thought a little, and then said, "What, that is the Marquis de Villiers, then! He is very handsome—there is no doubt about that; his figure is very good. I had imagined him a different sort of looking person." She mused a little, and then added, "Yes, I went out a little earlier than usual. I had written a long time, and my head ached; I wanted air." She put her hand up to her forehead. "The walk has not done me any good though, nor the fright either. My head aches dreadfully; I must get some rest. I shall close the curtains, shut my eyes, go without dinner, and be quite well in the evening."

At eight o'clock, Guy arrived. Evelyn was not in the drawing-room. He was

received by M. and Madame Severin and the Curé, who had come to bid him welcome, and Anne, who saw at once that his mood had changed since they had parted.

Guy began by telling them that an aunt of his, or rather a cousin of his mother's, the Vicomtesse de Nébriant, had bought a place in the neighbourhood, and that she had resolved to pay him a visit, in order to watch over the improvements she was making in her new home, before settling in it. He had been obliged to set off at once to prepare the chateau for her reception. "It is very tiresome," he added; "but when my dear cousin—who, by the way, does not at all care to be called my aunt—takes an idea into her head, it is easier to submit than to struggle. So I acquiesced at once; and, so far, I am glad

to have had a good reason for returning here a month sooner than I had intended. And now do tell me if you can, who is the beautiful apparition I met in the park to-day—the loveliest vision that I ever set eyes on.”

Anne smiled, and answered, “A similar question was put to me a short time ago—at least, as far as the mention of an apparition. You were also taken for a phantom, Guy, but a rather alarming one.”

“You know her, then?” Guy eagerly cried. “Who on earth is she, and how comes it that there should be such a beautiful girl in this neighbourhood, and that I should never have seen or heard of her?”

“But did you not know, dear Guy,” Madame Severin said, “that we were expecting a visit, which was a kind of

bequest from your father—the daughter of his friend?”

“The girl that you had invited here when I went away? But I thought she was a child; and the person I saw to-day in the park must be eighteen or nineteen—a tall, fair, slim creature, beautiful beyond description.”

The door opened at that moment, and the object of his admiration came in. Guy rose, and Evelyn gave a little start. She did not expect to meet him so soon in so intimate a manner. They were introduced to each other. The meeting in the park was talked of, and laughed over. The evening passed pleasantly enough. All resentment against Anne seemed to have vanished from Guy's mind. A new, sudden, strange feeling had taken possession of him; one of those impressions which, in an

instant, do the work of years. He left the chalet that evening, over head and ears in love with Evelyn Devereux; and if Anne did not know it yet, a vague uneasiness, an unaccountable depression, was already casting a shadow on her future.

CHAPTER XIV.

THE Vicomtesse de Nébriant's visit was rather an important event for the young owner of the Château de Villiers; and though he did not in the least foresee what were to be its ultimate consequences, he nevertheless made the requisite preparations with some amount of reluctance. The chateau had hitherto remained in the state in which his father had left it. Guy had almost forgotten the immense suite of rooms which had been closed since his mother's death. He never went into them, and had not the most distant thought of throwing them open on this occasion. On the eve of

the Vicomtesse's arrival he desired Thibault to get ready for her the little apartment on the ground floor which his father had inhabited, and did not dream of making any change in his magnificent but cheerless ancestral residence. But he soon found out that these modest intentions were not at all in keeping with the Vicomtesse's ideas, and that he had literally counted without his host. Barely an hour passed after her arrival before the energetic lady had inspected every room from the top to the bottom of the castle, looked under all the chair and sofa-covers, peeped [through protecting folds of brown paper, and lifted up the carefully-pinned sheets which enveloped some of the furniture. Then with many exclamations of surprise and admiration, she declared to her astonished cousin that positively she could not sleep under his

roof unless he allowed her to occupy the room and the bed with the golden canopy which his grandfather had fitted up on purpose for the reception of the Duke of Orleans, the Regent of France.

“And then, my dear Guy, besides this little fancy of mine which I know you will gratify, I must entreat you to let me examine at leisure all the lovely things which are lying hidden in this wonderful house of yours. You do not seem the least aware of the treasures you possess. Why, I have caught glimpses of vases and China figures and beautifully painted panels enough to turn anybody’s head—things worth a king’s ransom! and there they are out of sight, hidden, buried!”

It was before an *étagère* in one of the deserted drawing-rooms that the Vicomtesse was holding forth in this way, and

strewing the parquet with brown and silver paper and hay in which the things she was unpacking had been for years wrapt up. "What a barbarous idea!" she exclaimed, "to hide in a corner what would ornament a whole floor. Only look at this vase. I have no doubt it is one of Benvenuto Cellini's works. If it were placed by itself on a table, people would come any distance to see it. And I ask you, was there ever anything more lovely than these Majolica dishes and this group of Dresden china, and oh! this darling love of a fan!"

She stopped to examine and use the last mentioned article, and Guy took advantage of the opportunity to interrupt this long inventory of his possessions, which he was getting very tired of; and patience was not, especially on occasions of this sort, his principal merit. He put

a stop to it in the most courteous manner possible, first by begging the Vicomtesse to accept the fan, the beauties of which she was displaying, and then adding, as he playfully kissed her hands—

“My dear cousin, pray let me say as they do in Spain, ‘This house is yours.’ As long as you will do me the honour of remaining here, I hope you will consider it as such, and rule here as monarch of all you survey. Thibault and his wife will obey your orders and execute all your wishes. And now will you allow me to give you my arm, for dinner is ready? The dining-room, is, I believe, the only room in the house which you will not be obliged to re-arrange. Some suggestions, perhaps, you will have to make to my cook. I answer for it that I shall approve and accept of them.”

The Vicomtesse’s rapture was evinced

in a perfectly juvenile manner. She clapped her hands, jumped for joy, and throwing her arms about Guy's neck, called him, "Guido del mio cuor," told him he was all that was most charming and delightful, and that she would reward him for his amiability by taking him at his word and transforming his house into a fairy palace! Then they sat down to dinner, which she declared was faultless, and all the time it lasted she entertained him with an account of her plans, which he listened to in a very absent manner. The Vicomtesse was tired, and retired at an early hour to the Regent's room, which allowed Guy to hasten as usual to the chalet, where a new attraction, an interest he did not acknowledge to himself and which no one yet observed or suspected, drew him with a more powerful, more entrancing,

though less sweet and elevating influence than that which Anne Severin had so long exercised over him. An abrupt transition had taken place in his feelings. Still it could not be said that he had really transferred to another the affection he had ever felt for the gentle companion of his childhood. It was true that he had been angry with Anne, and

To be wroth with one we love

Doth work like madness in the brain.

It was true that at that very moment Evelyn Devereux had appeared before him in all her dazzling and wonderful beauty, and that at once he had been irresistibly fascinated. It is true that when the heart is sore and wounded there is a sense of relief in an impression which takes hold of the fancy and diverts the mind from the aching pain of disappointment, and that he yielded more

easily to this bewitchment than he might have done perhaps at any other moment; but he did not transfer, not at once at least, to the new object of his youthful passion, any of that peculiar, deep, holy love he had felt for Anne Severin. The two loves, if one of them deserved the name, were perfectly different, and as evening after evening he went to the chalet, he could hardly have said which of them was the strongest. One was like the steady light of a pure fixed star, the other like the flash of a wandering comet.

Meanwhile the Vicomtesse was setting to work at the chateau. Guy found himself relieved from the burthen of entertaining her, and this advantage was cheaply purchased, he considered, by the full powers he had given her to remodel the interior aspect of his house. He

knew she had very grand ideas, but her taste was perfect, and the renovation of the chateau could not have been placed in better hands. Madame de Nébriant had at once a talent and a passion for this sort of occupation, and had just bought for this very purpose the little chateau of Hauteville. She was a middle-aged widow, without children, and, passionately fond of the world as she was, it might have been supposed that her apartments in Paris would have suited her tastes better at all times than a country place. But the worst of it was that this not very large set of rooms was so charmingly furnished, so altogether perfect in all its arrangements, that it afforded no further scope for her genius. To alter would have been to spoil it. This melancholy fact had constrained her to seek for some other residence, where

her activity could display itself; but it was beyond her hopes to meet with such a piece of good fortune as her cousin's offer had been. She had never had before so excellent an opportunity of exercising her taste on such a grand scale, and was proportionably elated.

The Vicomtesse was therefore entirely absorbed in this business. She began by holding long conferences with Madame Thibault, whom she found extremely well disposed to carry out her views. This good woman did not at all share her husband's aversion for the strange lady who was all of a sudden interfering in what he had long considered his exclusive domain. She was much younger than he was, and her greatest wish was to see all the fine things in the chateau restored to light. She quite worshipped the propitious being who was

about to bring about this great change, and to restore the Château de Villiers to its former grandeur.

With the assistance of so ardent an ally the work of the Vicomtesse proceeded smoothly, if not quickly. It was, of course, a long business to take the inventory of all that the chateau contained, and yet more to decide where each bit of furniture was to be placed, to restore to their several places the curtains and hangings which the lapse of time had not injured, or to supply new ones where the case required it. All this necessitated an indefinite residence at the chateau, and went much beyond what Guy had foreseen when he had first set Madame de Nébriant to work. But as she did not trouble him at all, he did not much care whether she stayed on or not, and indeed it was

rather agreeable than otherwise to have an ostensible reason for putting off his journey and remaining at Villiers. The Vicomtesse's great wish was to give Guy a surprise, she said, and accordingly she entreated him not to look into the great drawing-rooms till all was finished. He had agreed to this with a readiness which would have been suspicious, had not the Vicomtesse been too absorbed to notice it. She felt persuaded that her presence at Villiers must be a great resource to her poor cousin in his lonely, melancholy life, and every morning she apologized for leaving him for the whole day, for she divided her time between Villiers and Hauteville, where she went to superintend her own improvements. "But when it is all finished, my dear child, I shall devote myself entirely to you." Guy always begged her not to

hurry herself, and made up his mind very cheerfully to see her only at dinner-time, and to spend almost all the rest of the day at the chalet.

Once he named the Severins before her, and the Vicomtesse exclaimed, "Oh, I know Pierre Severin. That agent whom your father thought had behaved so well. Yes, of course I will see him another day, when I am not so busy." And she left the room, shaking in a disdainful manner her thin greyish curls.

If Madame de Nébriant had seen the dreadful frown on Guy's brow, or heard the murmured epithet he bestowed upon her, as she majestically walked away, it is probable she would have quarreled for ever with her cousin, taken a final leave of Villiers that day, and abandoned her beautiful schemes for its improvement. But as Guy re-

strained himself, though with difficulty, from uttering his uncomplimentary sentiments, these results were averted, and he only resolved not, for the present, at least, to bring about a meeting between his friends and the lady whom *in petto* he had so violently apostrophised.

“It is lucky for her, luckier than she is aware of,” he muttered between his teeth, “that the chalet is so near the chateau, for it is only that proximity that makes her presence here bearable.”

CHAPTER XV.

THE Vicomtesse's task was accomplished, and the day arrived when, taking Guy's arm, she led him into the hitherto forbidden precincts of his own house. They stood together in the midst of all the new splendour of the great drawing-room of the castle. It must be in fairness admitted that she had some reason to be satisfied with her work, and if the owner's eyes had been the most fastidious in the world they could have found nothing to criticise or disapprove. Guy, without giving much thought to it, had natural good taste, and cared more for beauty and harmony in the

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objects about him than for magnificence. In this respect he was thoroughly satisfied. The Vicomtesse with admirable skill had disguised or banished all traces of the bad taste which marked the early part of this century, and on the other hand had turned to account treasures belonging to more remote periods, which she had drawn from innumerable lumber rooms and old cupboards. Out of these recesses had been dragged pieces of furniture which would not have been appreciated by the late Marquis, or even by his wife, but which harmonized admirably with the oaken panels and the fine gilding of the old-fashioned rooms. Pictures, vases full of flowers, handsome table-covers, and the general arrangement of the furniture, grouped with skill in that immense room, took away its formal appearance, and lent it, on the

contrary, quite a new look of life and cheerfulness which Guy was delighted with. That great *salon*, which he used to think so melancholy, now reminded him of the small one at the chalet, and pleased him in the same way, only in this case there were added to cheerfulness and comfort the magnificence of art and the refinements of luxury. He thanked Madame de Nébriant with more warmth and real pleasure than he had anticipated. The Vicomtesse reaped the full amount of praise which she considered she deserved.

“And now, my dear cousin,” Guy said, kissing her hand, “how can I show my gratitude? Is there anything more you can do . . . or rather that I can do for you?”

“Well, my dear Guy, as you put to me the question,” the Vicomtesse re-

plied at once, "there is something I want, nay, that I must do for you."

Guy felt somewhat uneasy, but as, after all, his last concession had produced a satisfactory result, he made up his mind to listen to what the Vicomtesse had to say, and they walked out from the drawing-room on to the terrace.

The spring was in full beauty—the lilacs scenting the air—the flowers of the parterre dazzling—the white vases and statues glowing in the sunshine. Everything without and within seemed to invite the young possessor of this beautiful place to enjoy all the brightness and the happiness of this world. Guy would have liked to be alone at that moment. Two conflicting voices seemed to speak in his soul, one full of joyful excitement, the other grave and almost sad. He longed to lend an ear

to them. He felt quite disinclined to talk, especially to the Vicomtesse. She went rattling on for several minutes without observing how silent and absent he was. However, he gathered at last that to inaugurate the reopening of the Château de Villiers he was to give a great ball to all the neighbourhood.

“ A ball ! ” he exclaimed, with a look of disgust and horror. His mind had been wandering in regions where gentle and ardent souls are often wont to lose themselves. He cared little for the common pleasures and amusements of the world, and at that moment the very sound of the word “ ball ” sounded disagreeably in his ears. He answered somewhat sternly, “ A ball ! — ah, no, that will never do. Have you forgotten that I am still in mourning ? ”

The Vicomtesse coloured, and looked

discomposed. She had really forgotten that the late Marquis de Villiers had ever existed, and so could not be expected to remember that a whole year had not elapsed since his death. She respected the proprieties of life too much not to regret this oversight, and to wish she had not suggested a ball. Nevertheless she had no idea of giving up her plan altogether, though for the present the subject was dropped.

After dinner, however, she skilfully brought it forward again by speaking of what an object it was for Guy to renew that intercourse with his neighbours which had been interrupted by his father's long seclusion. She dwelt on the social and political importance which belonged to his assuming the position which his birth, his wealth, and his possessions entitled him to hold. She

mixed together, as she went on, the wisest arguments and the most frivolous considerations, first reminding him of the necessity of exhibiting the silk hangings and new gilt cornices of the great drawing-room in all their freshness, and then holding forth on the duties of French nobles in a strain which sounded obsolete to a person of Guy's age. Then, with a dash of the fashionable Anglomania, she interspersed her aristocratic views with little touches of Radicalism, exhorting him to acquire a popularity which had been forfeited by his father's *sauvagerie*. Then she flew off to the plan of a conservatory which she said he must build at the end of the dining-room and soon reverting to her former theme, reminded him that Hauteville was close to Villiers, so that he need never be at loss for a hostess to

do the honours of his house. At last, for she saw that Guy was getting impatient, she came to the point, and limited herself this time to the proposal that he should give a dinner to the principal people of the neighbourhood, to be followed by a party to which all the neighbours should be invited.

Guy had made up his mind to some sort of compromise. He therefore agreed at once to this suggestion, hoping that for that evening at least he would be let off any further discussion, and glancing at the clock to see if the hour of the Vicomtesse's withdrawal was at hand; but he was not to be so soon released. Madame de Nébriant, eager to set to work, had already prepared a large sheet of paper, and declared that Guy must help her to write out at once the list of those who were to be invited. He was accord-

ingly obliged to sit down by her side, and to expedite the business by dictating to her the names of all the neighbours he could think of. Amongst them was Madame Lamigny.

“Lamigny!” the Vicomtesse repeated, raising her head and looking over her spectacles, which she was compelled to use when reading or writing, though carefully putting them aside at other times. “Lamigny! I remember having once received a letter from a M. Lamigny, who said he was a neighbour and friend of your father’s. He asked me to send my name and titles, and those of my mother, for some work or other he was writing on the French nobility.”

“Which meant a list of the persons presented at court from 1815 to 1820,” Guy said with a smile. “I have seen

that list. But M. Lamigny was not a friend of my father's, though he certainly was a neighbour. It has only been since his death, a few years ago, that his widow came here for the first time."

"And why did she come?" the Vicomtesse asked.

"She is the aunt of my great friend Franz Frank, and he always stays with her when he is in this neighbourhood. He is there now. You must have heard of him."

"What! Frank the artist? — the famous painter, whom all Paris was talking of last winter! What, is he in this neighbourhood? Why did you not tell me so before?"

The Vicomtesse had no real genuine love for art or for artists, but she liked the *relief* which the presence of men of talent

in every line, especially if they were also pleasing and agreeable, gave to her *salon*. Franz, in spite of his modesty, or perhaps on account of it, had become universally popular, and she was dying to know him.

“I was not the least aware that you were so intimate with him,” she added. “I must say that it was very unkind of you not to introduce him to me six months ago, when there was quite a rage for him.”

Guy answered, and with perfect truth, that Franz was always very reluctant to go into society, but he did not add, which would have been equally true, that he had a particular prejudice against the *salon* of the Vicomtesse; and he promised to present him to her at the first opportunity. She hastened to inscribe his name among the guests

to be invited for the forthcoming dinner.

“But I have other far older and greater friends than even Franz,” Guy said, “who must be asked to this dinner which you insist on my giving.”

He took the paper from the hands of the Vicomtesse, wrote in pencil at the top of the list the names of Monsieur and Madame Severin, and Mademoiselle Severin, and gave it back to his cousin.

“The Severins!” she exclaimed, pulling off her spectacles. “The Severins at a dinner to which all the principal people in the neighbourhood are invited! I never heard of such nonsense, my dear child. I really cannot suffer you to do such a foolish thing. Really! Severin! Pierre Severin! your father’s bailiff, his servant in fact, and Madame his wife, and Mademoiselle his daughter,

very proper people indeed to meet the guests you are intending to invite!" She stopped short. "What is the matter with you?" she asked in a different tone.

Guy had jumped up, and with such haste that the table at which he and the Vicomtesse were sitting rolled back some way on its castors. He went and stood against the chimney, his hands in his pocket, and, according to the habit he had lately formed, determinately silent, because afraid of breaking out into a passion; but the Vicomtesse had never seen such a look in his countenance, and scarcely ventured to speak. Guy's thoughts reverted to the companion of his childhood. He thought of the day when she had come into that very room, and stopped his arm when anger was maddening him. He thought of the

scar on her arm, and looked with emotion at the open window where she had so suddenly and so happily appeared on that never-to-be-forgotten day, and then he said slowly and, by dint of effort, in a calm manner, "My dear cousin, you can never have heard my father and mother's history?"

"What makes you say so?"

"Because in that case you would have known that if I am not the poorest man in France, it is simply owing to Pierre Severin's friendship for my father, and that at a time when I was in danger of becoming mad and wicked it was he who saved me from it. You would also have been aware that Madame Severin and my mother were sisters——"

"Sisters!" exclaimed the Vicomtesse, "I beg your pardon. Madame de Nébriant, your grandmother, had indeed

by an unpardonable *mésalliance*——” Guy interrupted her.

“Adopted sisters, if you will have it,” he impatiently exclaimed, “but truly sisters in heart, and so tenderly attached to each other that after my mother—pray, Madame, mark my words—that after my mother nobody had ever such claims on my affection as Madame Severin.”

He paused, for his voice had become more agitated than he wished, and the Vicomtesse, astonished and offended at his manner, was twirling the long gold chain which held her spectacle case, and did not make any reply. Guy went on, “And as to Anne Severin——” He had not quite made up his mind as to what he had intended to say, but the Vicomtesse’s smile, which was slightly ironical and impertinent, as he thought,

made him end the sentence in this manner—"As to Anne Severin, if she had not refused me, she would be by this time mistress of Villiers and everything I possess."

Madame de Nébriant's silvery locks seemed to stand on end. She gave a bound as if she had been shot, and looked so funnily aghast that in spite of himself Guy could hardly help laughing.

"Pray, do not agitate yourself, my dear cousin," he cried. "Do not misunderstand me. I am not going to marry Mademoiselle Severin, but only because it happens she has refused me. I see you would not have approved of the marriage, but you need not be alarmed. It is not going to take place."

The Vicomtesse had sank back into her arm-chair.

“Marry Mademoiselle Severin!” she exclaimed. “But you must be out of your mind!”

“I tell you she has refused me.”

“Refused you!” she cried, angrily. “Then she must be beside herself.”

“I don’t know about that, but you ought to be obliged to Anne, for it was entirely her own doing that she did not become Marquise de Villiers.”

“Now really, Guy, you quite exasperate me,” the Vicomtesse rejoined. “If anybody had told me such a thing I should have denied it through thick and thin. I must own I could see no excuse for it, if on second thoughts I did not perceive a very simple way of accounting for the whole business.”

“And what is that way?” Guy asked with a frown.

“It appears to me perfectly evident

and simple that M. Pierre Severin, with all his affectation of disinterestedness, and Madame his wife also, had managed the whole thing very cleverly, and that if the girl had not been a little goose——”

The Vicomtesse was stopped this time by the pressure of Guy's hand on hers, a pressure so stringent that it almost left a mark on the white soft hand. He controlled his anger, however, and she said half displeased and half frightened at his vehemence—

“What do you mean, Guy? What is the matter with you?”

“Nothing,” he answered, sitting down again. “Pray excuse me, I am sometimes very irritable. What you said made me angry, and I was on the point of falling into a passion, which I should have been very sorry for after-

wards. But we had better quite understand each other. As I told you just now, I wanted to marry Anne Severin. ——” He stopped an instant, and then continued, “I have given that up now, but as long as I live I shall feel for her the tenderest brotherly affection, and she and her parents will be always dearer to me than even my own relatives. You can therefore understand that I should consider any unfavourable or offensive remark upon them as an insult to myself which I could not get over.”

The Vicomtesse had by this time recovered from the first shock which Guy’s words had caused her, and especially she took comfort from his assurances that he no longer thought of marrying Anne. After all no harm had been done, and unless she intended to quarrel with her cousin, it was evident

she must yield to his fancies. Therefore with a slight shrug she again betook herself to the list, and wrote in ink the obnoxious names which Guy had scribbled with his pencil. He was standing near the table, and fidgiting as if he had something more to say, the Vicomtesse, pen in hand, awaited his orders.

“There is another person,” he said, “who must be asked with the Severins—an English girl, the orphan daughter of an old friend of my father’s, who is staying with them.”

The Vicomtesse sighed, and with a look of resignation said, “And pray, what is the name of this daughter of your friend’s?”

“Miss Devereux.”

“Miss Devereux!” she re-echoed.

“You do not mean the Miss Devereux

whose father died in India ? Lady Cecilia Morton's niece ?”

“ Exactly so,” Guy replied, much surprised at the effect which the name had produced.

“ Really, my dear Guy, you do nothing but astonish me this evening. However, this time I am quite agreeably surprised. Lady Cecilia Morton is a great friend of mine, and when she comes to Paris we spend our lives together. You know, of course, that she is a very great lady, and what is of more consequence, very much the fashion. She belongs to the cream of English society.”

“ I did not know it,” Guy said, “ and moreover I cannot say I care.”

“ But I care very much,” the Vicomtesse exclaimed, quite restored to her usual spirits, “ and I want to call as soon as possible on this young lady. . . .

But how on earth does it happen that Lady Cecilia's niece should be staying at a cottage in your park, and with the Severins?"

Guy explained the mystery by relating the circumstances which accounted for it. He had scarcely finished speaking before the Vicomtesse exclaimed—

“To-morrow without fail you must drive me to the chalet, and I can then at the same time make acquaintance with your friends.”

This unexpected incident restored both parties to good humour, and before they retired to rest it was settled that the visit to the chalet should be paid the following day.

CHAPTER XVI.

IF, after naming for the first time the Severins to the Vicomtesse, Guy had resolved not to introduce them to her, it was not from any fear that she would behave to them in the insolent manner which had annoyed him so much in her way of speaking about them. He knew his cousin was often frivolous and absurd, but he was aware also that she was more deficient in good sense than good taste. He felt certain that her prejudices would vanish as soon as she became acquainted with those she was holding so cheap; and as to Lady Cecilia's niece, even had she not been

pre-determined to like her, he had no misgivings as to the effect she would produce. But after that first conversation his indignation was so great that he considered the Vicomtesse quite unworthy of penetrating into the sanctuary which he held in such affection and reverence, and he promised himself she should never set her foot in it. Perhaps he was also reluctant that her quick-sighted curiosity should watch, and perhaps detect, symptoms of the admiration, of the feeling even beyond admiration, which he was beginning to entertain towards the beautiful English girl, who on her side was encouraging his attentions perhaps in a more marked manner than he was as yet paying them. But now, thanks to that wretched dinner, which he had been fool enough to agree to give, he was obliged to do just what

he meant to avoid, and even to force it on the Vicomtesse. In consequence he was more put out than pleased at the victory he had achieved, and as he walked to the chalet that evening a little later than usual, a feeling of sadness stole over him as he thought that this evening was perhaps the last he should spend in exactly the same way as he had spent so many lately.

The night was as sweet and fragrant as the previous day. Guy walked slowly across the park, enjoying the fresh soft air, and the same feeling which had made him shrink in the morning from his cousin's society now inclined him to banish from his mind their recent conversation. But it was not only the Vicomtesse and her tiresome peculiarities which were oppressing him then. It was not on account of their

recent dispute and subsequent reconciliation that he at one moment had hastened forward and then drew back, and at last, when he reached the door of the chalet, instead of going in at once, he stood under the shade of the verandah, trying to look more composed than he felt.

The door of the drawing-room was open as in the summer, and he could see the inside of the little *salon*, and with one exception, every person within it. M. Severin was reading by the light of a lamp on a little stand by his side. Another lamp hung from the ceiling over the round table where Anne and her mother were working, and listening to a conversation between the Curé and Franz, who were sitting opposite to each other. Franz had a pencil in his hand and an album before him, but he was more occupied in listening and answer-

ing than in drawing. The conversation seemed to be interesting, judging by Franz's countenance, by the deep attention which Anne gave to it, and above all by the tone of the Curé's voice, which now and then reached Guy's ears. He knew well the earnest gentle tones of that kind voice, to which an ardent zeal and a deep tenderness imparted impressive accents when anything unusual called forth its burning charity. On these occasions the Abbé Gabriel's humble meek countenance became majestic, his simple untutored language impressive and eloquent. God spake at those times by the lips of his faithful servant, and great effects were sometimes produced by his words. It almost seemed as if this was the case at that moment. For when the Curé left off speaking Franz remained silent and thoughtful.

His hand was unconsciously drawing lines on the paper, and when he raised his eyes and looked earnestly at the starry sky, his whole countenance was changed. It was not a gaze of ardent inquiry, it was an appeal, and almost a prayer. He dropped his pencil, bowed down his head on his hands, and sank into a fit of deep musing. The Curé, surprised at the effect which his words had produced, remained silent also. He closed the book which had brought about the discussion, and gave it back to Franz.

Sometimes when a number of persons have been sitting together and talking, all at once, without any apparent reason, every one becomes silent. Amongst the natives of the North a poetical superstition is current which ascribes this sudden and simultaneous silence to the

invisible passage of an angel among those who were conversing. If this is ever true, it might have been so during those moments at the chalet. The unobserved witness of that scene felt impressed with a sense of its solemnity, but almost at the same minute a different emotion superseded the former, and just as he was coming into the house he again stopped short. A voice which seemed to proceed rather from heaven than from earth had broken the strange silence, and the drawing-room, the garden, even the whole vault of the clear sky, seemed to thrill and vibrate with loud, sweet, and wonderfully beautiful tones.

Guy was passionately fond of music, and his love for it was wild and strange in its effects. It was to him like a real language, and one which expressed with

irresistible power the ideas it conveyed. Anne had once triumphed through its means over the fierceness of his despair. But it was not her voice that was now stirring his soul, and very different feelings were now called forth in his heart. The subdued silence which had followed the Curé's last words was broken through. Evelyn was singing, and all those who had been sitting at the round table moved away from it. Guy came in and stood near the book-case, close to the pianoforte. Evelyn saw him and blushed, but she did not stop. Her voice faltered a little. She looked up for an instant, and then cast down her eyes. Never had her glance been so fascinating, or her singing so charming. When the song was ended she looked up again, and met Guy's impassioned eyes, which obliged her to

veil her own with her fringed eyelids. She attempted to rise.

“Oh no; I implore you not,” Guy whispered in a supplicating manner. “Do stay, I beg of you.”

Evelyn sat down again, and ran her hand listlessly over the keys, while Guy bending over said a few words to her in a low voice.

Evelyn rose again a second time, looking greatly agitated. Guy was trying to meet her eyes, and to detain her as before.

“No, no,” she said, shaking her head and trembling.

“One word.”

“Not to-day. Not now.”

“When?” Evelyn did not answer. “Ah, for heaven’s sake name a time. Fix the day when you will give me an answer.”

“Well, to-morrow, perhaps,” she hesitatingly said. “No, no, not to-morrow. Thursday, yes, on Thursday. But till then do not speak to me about it.”

Then Evelyn left the piano. There was for a minute a strange smile on her lips, but it passed away almost immediately. She went out of the drawing-room, and if any one had followed her she would have been found a few minutes afterwards sitting in the garden crying bitterly. Nobody, however, thought of seeking for her there. Guy had remained where she had left him, and seemed to be attentively studying a piece of music he had taken up. The Curé went away with Franz, who had proposed to walk home with him. They had not paid much attention to the music that evening. Anne had gone

with Evelyn to the pianoforte, but had seated herself behind her in the dark recess of the window, and she did not emerge from that corner till, in accordance with Madame Severin's English habits, the tea table was as usual brought in. Anne then came and took her usual place behind the urn, but when she tried to lift up the teapot her hand trembled so much that she was obliged to put it down again. Guy had not taken any notice of Anne till that moment. He now came up to the tea table.

"What is the matter, Anne?" he said. "Are you ill, you look so very pale?"

"It is nothing," she answered. "Pray do not say anything about it, or frighten mamma. . . . I am only a little cold, I think. The window was kept open too long to-night."

Guy was looking at her anxiously. Anne smiled, and said, "I assure you it is nothing. I have a headache, which happens to me very often. We had better not talk to-night. I am too tired."

"No, you are quite right. We had better not talk. You ought to rest, dear darling Anne. Now, do not go and be ill."

"No, indeed I will not. Good-night, dear Guy." She shook hands with him and left the drawing-room.

CHAPTER XVII.

ON the following day, at the appointed hour, Guy was in his phaeton at the door of the chateau, waiting for the Vicomtesse. He was absent and pre-occupied, and if when she took her place by his side Madame de Nébriant had expected to find him grateful for the act of condescension she was performing, she must have been disappointed. But though she was not pleased to find him so little gracious, it was not of the Severins she thought just then. It was the niece of her friend she was going to see, and that was all she cared about. It was an inveterate habit with her to

think aloud, and in spite of Guy's taciturnity and the awkward discussions between them the day before, she could not refrain from uttering some of the thoughts that were passing through her mind.

“It certainly was a strange idea of that old Devereux, that ordering his daughter here before he died. I remember that Lady Cecilia used to talk of him as an extraordinary being, scarcely in his right senses. He was desperately in love with somebody or other in his youth, and his proposal to Lady Sarah was accompanied by a declaration that he could never again care in the same way for anybody else. Not very encouraging for the lady; but she had taken a fancy to him, and Lord Hartley wished her to accept him, because in his position, and at a distance from home, his daughters had

few opportunities of making suitable marriages. Henry Devereux was of a good family, and very well off. His daughter is an heiress, I suppose?"

Guy looked annoyed, and said, "I have never heard anything about it."

"That is so like you! But to return to what I was saying. What an unaccountable idea it was to remove a girl accustomed to all the luxury and magnificence of aristocratic life in England to a lodge in the park of Villiers inhabited by ——"

The Vicomtesse stopped, and Guy coldly asked, "Are you speaking of the chalet?"

"Excuse me, my dear cousin. I really did not mean to say anything against the cottage or its owners, but without intending to reflect upon it or them, I know better than you do what

must be the contrast between a small house in the country in a remote part of France, and the home where Miss Devereux has spent her life, for I have been at Oakwood Castle."

"Have you?" Guy asked with sudden interest. "You know the place where she was brought up?"

"Oh dear, yes," the Vicomtesse replied. "I once spent two months there—a long time ago, indeed—twelve years, I think. It was then I heard of Mr. Devereux and his little girl, whom they were then expecting from India. I little thought I should one day meet her here. Oakwood was a beautiful place even at that time, and I have heard that Mr. Morton and Lady Cecilia have greatly improved it since. He is very rich, and she has excellent taste."

"That place is finer, then, than any

of our French chateaux?" Guy asked. "Much more so, I suppose by what you say, than my poor Villiers?"

He made his inquiry in a rather anxious manner. The Vicomtesse quickly replied,

"Oh, as to that, I have no hesitation in saying that your poor Villiers, as you call it, can stand comparison with the most beautiful places on the other side of the Channel, especially, I must be allowed to say, since I have had a hand in its arrangement. I do not pretend to deny that before I set to work the state apartments in all their grand formality would have appeared dreadfully melancholy to an English girl. But I do not mind how soon she sees them now. I am perfectly certain that there is not a fault to be found in any one of the rooms."

Guy touched his horses with the whip, and said, "You have done me a great service, my dear cousin, and I do not think I have quite thanked you enough for it."

He accompanied the compliment with a most gracious smile, and the Vicomtesse was delighted with both these manifestations of his returning good humour. She had been tempted to resent the defiant tone which Guy had taken in their recent conversation, and had determined to give him a lesson by assuming an attitude of dignified displeasure. Indeed, before falling asleep in the great state bed on the previous night, she had almost resolved upon it, and again when she saw him looking grave and gloomy at the beginning of their drive. But somehow or other, when it came to the point, she felt a little afraid of her young cousin,

and did not venture to testify her irritation, and now that he smiled, it vanished like the snow in sunshine. That beautiful smile of Guy's did not often appear on his earnest and somewhat severe countenance ; but when it did, the effect was so bright and enchanting, that it was difficult to resist its charm. Madame de Nébriant felt quite in spirits again. " He is unlike anybody else," she thought, " but very captivating ;" and then she said,

" I am more delighted than ever that Villiers is in its best looks just now, for I should have been sorry if this English young lady had seen nothing better in France than the poky cottage where she is staying."

" Here it is," Guy said, pulling up his horses. " We will put off all comments upon it until you have paid your visit."

The pretty picturesque little chalet, clothed with creepers and flowers, and set, as it were, in the midst of roses, did not all answer to the idea the Vicomtesse had formed of it. She was struck with this at once, though she said nothing. Guy saw that his previsions were going to be realized. His cousin's quick eye glanced over the drawing-room as they entered, and the expression of her countenance changed. She immediately perceived that everything in it, though simple, was in the most perfect good taste. The walls, indeed, were only papered, the furniture covered only with chintz, but the books and the flowers, and all the things scattered about, and the unformal look of comfort which reigned in Madame Severin's room, betokened habits and tastes which did not leave a doubt on her mind with regard to its occupants.

“They certainly cannot be vulgar people.” This was the interior verdict passed by the Vicomtesse after her hasty survey of the *ensemble* and details of the little *salon*. And when the owners of the chalet appeared, she greeted them much more graciously than she had intended. Neither M. nor Madame Severin, nor Anne, were likely to destroy the good impression their abode had produced. Everything, therefore, turned out as Guy had expected. He did not, however, sit through the visit. As soon as he had introduced the Vicomtesse to his friends, he said that he had to call on a neighbour, and immediately went out through the garden door; and in so doing happened to meet somebody in a white muslin gown and straw hat who was coming along the pathway of the meadow, and with whom he exchanged a few words

before returning to the road where his phaeton was waiting. An hour afterwards he came to fetch the Vicomtesse away, but in the mean time he had again become absent and anxious, and, in spite of the praises of his friends, which Madame de Nébriant was pouring in his ears, he seemed very downcast, and said little in reply. She did not notice this at first; she was full of a subject of more consequence than the Severins.

“Yes,” she said, “that little Anne is not the least like what I had expected. She is not plain or awkward, or at all a figure. . . . But, my dear Guy, when I saw that beauty, that marvel, that goddess come in through the garden window, I protest I could not believe my eyes.”

She stopped; Guy did not speak.

“O Guy, Guy! There is something very suspicious in the fact that a young

man of your age, and not a very unexcitable one either, should have been so entirely silent with regard to the beauty of a person, the mere sight of whom sends an old woman like me into raptures."

Guy went on looking before him, and made no answer. She went on—

"What am I to think? What do you think I can suppose, except the very natural, and I own exceedingly agreeable idea which must, of course, suggest itself?——"

"What idea are you talking of?" Guy asked with a frown.

"Come, now, Guy!" the Vicomtesse exclaimed impatiently, "you really must not answer in that way. It is not becoming, and, as you really oblige me to do so, I must remind you that I am your aunt, and that you have no right to

stop my mouth on any subject I choose to speak of."

Guy smiled and bowed.

"I do not deny your right to speak, my dear aunt or cousin. I only claim for myself that of holding my own tongue."

"But I think I have also the right to expect from my nephew a reply to my questions."

"I did not understand that you were putting to me a question. On the contrary, it was I who was asking you what was the delightful idea which my silence on that particular subject had suggested."

"You know, of course, what I mean?"
"No." "Do not tell me you don't."

"Well, I suppose I can guess. You ascribe my silence to an excess of admiration, or something of that sort, I conclude." The Vicomtesse smiled. "But suppose there was any ground for this

idea, I do not see why it should be so agreeable a one, especially to you."

"But, Guido mio," cried the Vicomtesse, "have you forgotten what I told you of Miss Devereux, of her family and fortune, and all the advantages which I own I expected to find balanced by an heiress's wonted ugliness. And instead of that I find a perfect beauty! and you expect me not to be enraptured! Upon my word, that old Devereux was not so great a fool after all. I am rather inclined to think he shrewdly anticipated what I now foresee when he insisted so much on this visit to the Severins."

These last words seemed to make an impression on Guy, and to turn the course of his thoughts. He pursued them in silence, whilst the Vicomtesse on her side gave free scope to her lively imagination. Guy would indeed have

been surprised could he have seen how far it had travelled during a few minutes—how she had already pictured to herself Evelyn at Paris, and, anticipating her introduction to her own exclusive set, revelled in the idea of the effect which her wonderful beauty would produce, and the *éclat* it would give to her *salon*. All this had passed with the speed of lightning through Madame de Nébriant's mind, and having gained a little advantage, as she supposed, over her cousin's taciturnity, she was about to renew the attack, when, in his grave and quiet manner, but this time very gently, though very positively, he said, "My dear cousin, think anything you like, but for the present do me the kindness not to speak of that subject." His manner was not imperious, he spoke in a tone of entreaty and even of agitation. The Vicomtesse

instantly stopped short, and did not finish her sentence, feeling at once that to try and force on the conversation would be indiscreet and ill-judged; and she was not prone to defects of this sort. It was perhaps for this reason that in spite of her want of head and of heart, of her frivolity and her absurdities, she had many partisans and almost friends. To refrain from urging what others do not like to hear, and gracefully to avoid subjects they do not wish to be dwelt upon, is the result of tact, and nothing more. But in the atmosphere of a *salon* tact, the worldly counterfeit of charity, becomes almost a virtue. It is, perhaps, the only approach to it that thrives in that unnatural sphere.

The Vicomtesse accordingly kept to herself all her future cogitations, and made a resolution not to utter again that

day Evelyn Devereux's name ; but fate had ordained otherwise, for no sooner had she arrived at the chateau, than a letter was placed in her hands which by an odd coincidence happened to be from Lady Cecilia Morton, Evelyn's aunt, whom she had not heard of for some time, and had not seen for three years. Up to the time of the Marquis's death there had been no intercourse between the inhabitants of Villiers and the Vicomtesse, so that Lady Cecilia had no idea that there was any chance of her niece and her friend meeting. She was writing to the latter that for the sake of her health she was going to a German watering-place and then to Italy ; that she should only stop in Paris for a day or two, to wait for her niece, who had been paying a visit to some friends of her father's. "I have written to her by

this post," she said, "to meet me at the Hotel Meurice, and we shall then immediately proceed to Wiesbaden. The Vicomtesse could not repress an exclamation of surprise. "What a strange coincidence!" she cried. "Read this letter, Guy." Guy took the letter, read it, and returned it to Madame de Nébriant without expressing any particular astonishment.

"According to this letter she must be going away immediately," the Vicomtesse said.

"Lady Cecilia?" Guy answered in an absent manner. "So I see—she is going to Italy."

"I am not talking of her—I mean that the fair Evelyn must be about to take her departure."

"Evelyn!" Guy replied in the same

dreamy manner. “Yes, she is going, I knew it.”

The Vicomtesse glanced at her letter, and thought, “It is only to-day that she can have received her aunt’s letter, and he knows all about it. That looks well; and when he is off his guard he calls her Evelyn, that is still better, and I had better abstain from asking him any questions at present. I should not get much out of him, and I know all he could tell me.”

END OF SECOND VOLUME.





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